

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEBREW IDEA OF HESED  
IN THE BIBLICAL LITERATURE

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To Dr. Willis W. Fisher, devoted teacher and beloved friend, who did ~~hesed~~ so that we could understand.

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## ABSTRACT

This study traces the development of the idea of hesed in the Hebrew Old Testament, the translation of the idea into the Greek of the Septuagint, and the metamorphosis of the idea in the New Testament where the language is Greek and the theology is no longer quite Jewish. A final chapter is concerned with the relationship of the idea of hesed to some of the insights of Paul Tillich and Abraham Maslow.

The basic assumptions of the study are (1) that hesed is covenant language and (2) that the theologized idea of hesed which describes the God-man relationship derives from the social idea of hesed which describes the quality of relationships within the context of personal and tribal covenants and agreements. The first assumption has never been seriously questioned. The second assumption would be rejected by such writers as Jean L'Hour, but it is very difficult to either demonstrate or disprove the thesis. Social custom and the theologizing of the ideal of social relationships are so inseparably entwined that it may be impossible to separate the notions about man's relationship to God from notions about social ethics. The acceptance or rejection of the assumption makes no real difference in the outcome of one's understanding of hesed, but does suggest a fairly clear methodology.

The initial focus of the study is upon tribal and social covenants and the nature of the relationships which

are defined by such agreements. The covenant between Abraham and Abimelek as described in Genesis 21 is compared with the Ras Shamra treaty text in which Mursil makes a covenant with Niqmepa (RS 17.338). From the consideration of these texts the nature of the relationship which is described by hesed begins to come into focus.

The second main section of the study deals with the hesed idea as it is theologized. It is understood in this section that any understanding of hesed must be largely in terms of the theologized idea because there is no extant Hebrew writing in which the author did not understand hesed in terms of the relationship between God and his covenanted people. Long before any written tradition existed, the theologized ideal hesed had shaped the social tradition of Israel. The hesed of man is only a poor copy of the hesed of Yahweh.

A separate chapter is devoted to a consideration of the use of hesed in the Psalms. In a real sense, the Psalms are a celebration of the covenant between Yahweh and Israel. The particular word which describes that covenant is hesed. Israel is sometimes called the hasidim, the doers of hesed; Yahweh is the One who does hesed with Israel. Because of the peculiar construction of Hebrew poetry, the Psalms offer an important body of material for study in connection with the particular values which are associated with hesed. It is of major interest to note in the parallel construction of the Psalms which words are paired with hesed. From a study

of these words it is possible to derive what might be called "hesed-values." These particular "values" become important when tracing the parallels between the hesed idea and the "Being values" of Abraham Maslow.

Of considerable importance in tracing the idea of hesed through the Biblical literature is the fact that the Septuagint writers chose to translate the word by eleos (mercy) rather than by agape. With this fact in mind, many of the passages of the New Testament come into focus as reflecting the Old Testament hesed idea. One of the important passages discussed in the dissertation is I Peter 4-10.

A final chapter is concerned with hesed and the writings of Paul Tillich and Abraham Maslow. It is shown that the ontology of love as analysed by Tillich is in fact identical with the ontology of hesed. The Being-values of Maslow are shown to be those values commonly associated with hesed. This latter fact leads to the possibility of speculation about the existence of "absolute" value, or the value inherent in the nature of being itself.



## Chapter I

### INTRODUCTION

#### AN OVERVIEW

The understanding of any people must of necessity involve an understanding of that people's basic values and concepts,---their self-understanding and their notions about which sorts of behaviour should be encouraged and what sorts of behaviour should be considered abberant. A cursory survey of cultures which have their roots in the Judaeo-Christian tradition or a brief study of the "peoples of the Bible" would reveal the multiplicity of self-understanding and of basic values and concepts. There is no single standard of behaviour. Basic notions, once they are theologized, may express themselves in widely divergent behaviour patterns. But it may be possible to discover ideological threads which run through and underlie a tradition which through many centuries has developed a multiplicity of facets and modes of expression.

This is not to suggest that there is a single Biblical tradition. The material of the Bible is quite diverse, and the problem of finding some unifying principle or concept has occupied many scholars. Jakob Jocz finds this unifying concept in the idea of covenant.

The basic assumption of the Biblical documents, no matter how diverse, seems to be that Israel stands in a peculiar relationship to YHWH his God. It is therefore no exaggeration to say that covenantal theology is at the root of Biblical thinking.<sup>1</sup>

It is the assumption of this paper that Jocz is correct in his understanding of the place of the idea of covenant in the Biblical tradition. Furthermore, there is a particular covenant language in which the idea is expressed. Central to the covenant language of the Old Testament is the Hebrew word: hesed, a word with no exact English equivalent, but with a richness of meaning which must be grasped in order to understand the Hebrew's fundamental notions about his relationship to Yahweh and the basic expectations upon him regarding his relationship to his neighbor.

Social custom and the theologizing of the ideal of social relationships are so inseparably entwined that it may be impossible to separate the notions about man's relationship to God from notions about social ethics. It is assumed that the theology of covenant arises from social custom, but the theologized ideal becomes a shaping force in itself, so that social ethics are modified and molded by theological thought quite as much as vice versa. While the existing social ethic is given cosmic standing, the cosmos demands a

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<sup>1</sup>Jakob Jocz, The Covenant, a Theology of Human Destiny (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 9.

certain standard of behaviour.<sup>2</sup> The Hebrew would probably not even comprehend the attempt to separate these items, for to him the sacred and the secular were never distinct categories; indeed, "secular" ethics had no meaning.<sup>3</sup>

Hesed describes the covenant relationship, whether the God-man relationship or the man to man alliance. Whatever else the word is taken to mean, it means "covenant-mindedness." Snaith remarks that whereas hesed means "eagerness, steadfastness, mercy, loving-kindness," it is always within the covenant context.<sup>4</sup> It is this covenant context which leads many writers to translate the word as "loyalty." Jean L'Hour understands this as the primary meaning of the word. "The covenant demands that each of the partners show himself 'loyal' respecting the promises made to the other."<sup>5</sup> It is precisely this loyalty that God demands from Israel. "And what does Yahweh require of you, but to love hesed?"<sup>6</sup> "For I desire hesed and not sacrifice,

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<sup>2</sup>Jocz, p. 35. Also Jacob Jocz, The Spiritual History of Israel (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1961), p. 78.

<sup>3</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), I, 33.

<sup>4</sup>Norman H. Snaith, The Distinctive Ideas of the Old Testament (London: Epworth Press, 1944), p. 98, and Jocz, The Covenant, p. 55.

<sup>5</sup>Jean L'Hour, La Morale de L'Alliance (Paris: Gabalda, 1966), p. 37.

<sup>6</sup>Micah 6:8.

the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings."<sup>7</sup>

In the Genesis account of the dispute over the well at Beer-sheba, Abimelek asks of Abraham an assurance of continuing hesed in return for the hesed which Abimelek has already shown to Abraham.<sup>8</sup> Here the context is clearly that of tribal covenants, but the terminology is the same as that used concerning the covenant of Israel with Yahweh. It is of some interest that in this passage hesed is used as the antithesis of shaqar, "to be false." Abimelek extracts a promise from Abraham that he will not only do hesed, but that he will not tishqor (deal falsely).

The approach of this paper will be to examine the meaning of hesed first in the context of tribal covenantal relationships and other social agreements, and secondly in the context of the relationship between Israel and Yahweh. The cyclic nature of the process of theologizing social custom, striving after a theologized ideal, and further theologizing is assumed.<sup>9</sup> The chief problem in discussing these items is the assumption that they can be separated.

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<sup>7</sup>Hosea 6:6.      <sup>8</sup>Genesis 21:22-24.

<sup>9</sup>L'Hour does not agree with this assumption. He writes: "La morale d'Israel n'est pas fondée sur une analyse préalable de la nature humaine, elle a sa source dans les rapports inattendus entre Dieu et l'homme, dont l'Alliance est l'expression privilégiée. Cette Alliance se définit premièrement par Celui qui en est l'initiateur et le régulateur: Dieu. Ce qu'est Israel et ce qu'il doit faire découle immédiatement de ce qu'est Dieu pour Israel et de ce qu'il fait pour lui. p. 13.

The accounts of tribal and social relationships are so strongly colored by prophetic religion that a clear glimpse into "original" meanings may be impossible. Indeed, when Jonathan asks David for an agreement between their houses, he asks that David show him the hesed Yahweh.<sup>10</sup> When David keeps the agreement by bringing Mephibosheth into his house, it is in order to show him the hesed elohim.<sup>11</sup> Hesed is understood as the relationship which Yahweh grants to his people. Social relationships are understood in the light of this ideal.

In tracing the hesed idea into the New Testament, it is tempting to see the counterpart in agape. Just as the hesed of Yahweh is central to the Old Testament, so the love of God is central to the New Testament. But the translators of the Septuagint did not choose agape to convey the force of hesed; the word is quite consistently eleos (mercy). The hesed idea is certainly in the New Testament. When Parsons notes that "In men's religious relationship to God both the example and the teaching of Jesus challenge to utter devotion," (*italics his*) he is describing the hesed relationship internalized. It is not enough that men do the deeds required by hesed, but the emphasis of Jesus is upon utter sincerity.<sup>12</sup> But the question remains about the

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<sup>10</sup>I Samuel 20:14

<sup>11</sup>II Samuel 9:1.

<sup>12</sup>Ernest William Parsons, The Religion of the New Testament (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1939), p. 40.

rendering of hesed by eleos: how well does eleos convey to the Greek reader what hesed conveyed to the Hebrew? How was the understanding of the Old Testament covenant relationship colored by the Greek translation? No translations are exact. There are few words which translate from one language to another without at least a slight shift in meaning. Eleos may be understood as pity, mercy, or compassion. Surely this is a part of the meaning of hesed, but to emphasize this aspect of hesed is to stress its meaning as it relates to the covenant between unequals. Indeed Begrich<sup>13</sup> has shown that covenant is an agreement between parties of unequal status. Von Rad<sup>14</sup> points out that in many cases the agreement is imposed upon the inferior by the superior. In the matter of Israel's relationship to Yahweh, the covenant is clearly between unequals as L'Hour has stated.

"The history of Israel began with a completely unilateral initiative on the part of Yahweh, previous to any response or co-operation on the part of Israel; it follows that the people found themselves already absolutely dependent upon Yahweh, before even having tended the slightest act of obeissance. That excluded in radical fashion any conception of the Covenant which would try to make it a contract between equals.<sup>15</sup>

The absence of a single satisfactory word in Greek to translate the hesed idea may mean that in the New Testa-

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<sup>13</sup>J. Begrich, "Berit," in Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, LX (1944), 1 ff.

<sup>14</sup>Rad, I, 129.

<sup>15</sup>L'Hour, p. 17 ff.

ment hesed is expressed in many ways. It will be one of the tasks of this paper to explore the ideas which are rooted in the Old Testament hesed tradition without benefit of a "neat" translation.

Finally, the question remains regarding hesed and the self-understanding of contemporary man. For the Hebrew the hesed relationship was salvation itself:

O continue Thy hesed to those who know Thee,  
And Thy salvation to the upright of heart!<sup>16</sup>

But modern man in search of salvation is much more likely to look within himself or to consider his relationships with his fellow man. The existentialist trend in current thinking has resulted in more demythologizing than theologizing. Under the guidance of such diverse thinkers as Tillich, Bultmann, Camus, Sartre, and Kierkegaard among many others, God, if considered at all, is sought as the "ground of being"<sup>17</sup> rather than "out there." In contemporary thinking the Transcendent tends to become the "transcendent within." Thus, while the ancient Hebrew could not understand secular ethics, modern man can understand little else. Hence, the question of the last chapter of this paper is that of the relationship of hesed to the insights of the secular theology of the self and its relationships, i.e., of modern psychology.

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<sup>16</sup>Psalm 36:10.

<sup>17</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), p. 62.

## THE PROBLEM AND APPROACHES

The central problem of this paper, then, is how did the idea of hesed develop within the history of the Biblical literature? The second major question is how does this idea express itself in contemporary thought? Each of the chapters of this study addresses itself to an aspect of this question: what is the meaning of hesed in tribal and social relationships? What significances are attached to the idea as it is theologized? How is hesed defined by the rich literature of the Psalms? And how is hesed expressed in the language and cultural context of the Greek and New Testament periods? The last chapter concerns itself with the hesed idea in the thought of two contemporary thinkers: Paul Tillich, the theologian, and Abraham Maslow, the psychologist.

The methodology of the early chapters of this study is quite direct: chapters 2-4 are concerned with an analysis of the various usages of hesed in the Old Testament Hebrew text. Chapter two concerns itself with tribal covenant relationships which are the essential context of the hesed idea. Chapter three traces the idea as it is applied to the relationship between Israel and her God, and chapter four examines the rich and varied usages of hesed in the Psalms. It is an important aspect of the methodology of this latter chapter that hesed is often paired with near-synonyms in the parallel structure of the Psalms. Hence, it is quite natural



to speak of the hesed-zedakah passages or the hesed-'emeth passages. This feature of the structure of Hebrew poetry is quite important to the enrichment of the meaning of hesed as developed in this study.

The discussion in chapter five of necessity involves some complications in methodology as the language of the Septuagint and the New Testament is not Hebrew, but Greek. The rather detailed discussion of the various renderings of hesed in the Septuagint serves to answer two main questions: how did the Greek translators understand the word hesed itself and what theological considerations and biases colored the Greek understanding of the Old Testament hesed-covenant idea? This discussion is of considerable importance to the discussion of the hesed idea in the New Testament, in which there is added to the problems of the Greek language expressing Hebrew ideas and Greek thought modifying Hebrew theology a new literature for which there is no Hebrew "original." The two major methodological tools for this study are the language of the Septuagint and the parallels to Hebrew ideas in the Old Testament.

The problem of chapter six---how is the hesed idea expressed in the writings of Tillich and Maslow?---requires methodological considerations beyond the linguistic matters involved in the previous chapters. Here the primary matters considered are Tillich's ontology of love and the ontological experience from which theologizing about relationships arises. Utilizing Tillich's analysis, it is shown that the ontology

of love and the ontology of hesed are identical. Maslow's psychology of self-actualization is related to the hesed idea in that the hesed-values as described in earlier chapters in connection with the discussion of the words associated and paired with hesed, especially in the Psalms, are identical to the values described by Maslow as "Being-values" arising from the peak experiences.

If the conclusion of this study is correct, i.e., that there are in fact values which arise from the structure of being itself, then the ethical theorist may do well to note that here and there on the relativistic sea of human values there may be some navigation points which are determined by the nature of man and his universe.

#### PREVIOUS STUDIES AND THE POINT OF DEPARTURE

The matter of covenant in Israel's history has occupied a great deal of excellent scholarship. This paper is heavily indebted to a great number of scholars who have delineated quite well the history of the covenant idea in the Judeo-Christian tradition. Jacob Jocz has traced the development of covenant theology from early Hebrew beginnings to the contemporary Christian church.<sup>18</sup> Jean L'Hour has written very helpfully about the ethical content of covenant agreements.<sup>19</sup> Ronald Clements' discussion of the significance

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<sup>18</sup>Jocz, The Covenant.

<sup>19</sup>L'Hour, op. cit.

of the Abrahamic-Davidic covenant tradition is basic to the early chapters of this paper.<sup>20</sup> Annie Jaubert's work on covenant in Judaism just prior to the rise of Christianity has been very valuable.<sup>21</sup> But in all of these researches the focus has been upon covenant rather than upon hesed. The investigators are concerned with hesed as an idea inevitably encountered in the considerations of the meaning of covenant, but none have probed the meaning of hesed very far. It is the intent of this paper to use these preliminary discussions of the idea of hesed as descriptive of the covenant relationship as a point of departure for a rather detailed analysis of the multifaceted meaning of hesed itself. A.E. Goodman made a very preliminary thrust in this direction in his essay concerning hesed and todah in the Psalter,<sup>22</sup> but his interest had a very narrow focus, i.e., upon the linguistic tradition of these words in the psalter.

The other area of investigation which has been valuable to the present undertaking is that concerning the meaning of agape in the Biblical tradition. Especially

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<sup>20</sup>Ronald Clements, Abraham and David, Genesis 15 and Its Meaning for Israelites Tradition (London: SCM Press, 1967).

<sup>21</sup>Annie Jaubert, La Notion de L'Alliance dans le Judaïsme aux Abords de L'Ere Chretienne (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963).

<sup>22</sup>A.E. Goodman, "Hesed and Todah in the Linguistic Tradition of the Psalter," in Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindors (eds.) Words and Meanings (Cambridge: University Press, 1968).

noteworthy in this connection is the work of Ceslaus Spicq. His study of agape as a prolegomena to New Testament theology has been an important background study for the present undertaking.<sup>23</sup> What has been noted by Spicq and others is that whereas hesed is a basic relational value in the Old Testament, agape is the central relational idea in the New Testament. It has been natural to attempt to find hesed expressed as agape in Greek writings, but the Greek writers carefully avoided such an equation of words. The focus upon agape as the central New Testament idea seems to have taken attention away from eleos, the word used by the Greek writers to express hesed, so that the actual appearance of the hesed-idea in the New Testament has gone largely unelaborated. In this paper some of the New Testament expressions of hesed will be examined.

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<sup>23</sup>Ceslaus Spicq, Agape, Prolegomena à une Etude de Theologie Neo-Testamentaire (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955).

## Chapter II

HESED IN TRIBAL AND SOCIAL RELATION

As has been noted in the introduction, hesed described the relationship between parties who have entered into a covenant. The story of Abraham and Abimelek (Genesis 21:22-34) describes such an agreement and its attendant ceremonies. Abimelek has evidently wanted to extend his influence to Beer-sheba. Abraham had already settled there, and Abimelek could not win his point with military force, so he deemed it wise to make a covenant with Abraham.<sup>1</sup>

At that time Abimelek and Phicol the commander of his army said to Abraham, "God is with you in all that you do; now therefore swear to me by God; behold, you will not deal falsely with me or with my kith and kin (ulnini ulnekdi); according to the hesed which I have done with you, you will do with me and with the land in which you sojourn. And Abraham said, "I will swear."

Hesed is here not only the covenant ethic, but it is further clarified by its being contrasted to shaqar, to act deceitfully. The notions are quite concrete. Abimelek reminds Abraham that he has done hesed to Abraham and expects the same kind of action in return. Hesed is not an abstract; it is not merely an attitude or a profession of good will. It is a demonstrated way of acting. The Hittite covenant agreements may throw some light on the nature of the actions

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<sup>1</sup>Genesis 21:22-24 following the reconstruction of E.A. Speiser, Genesis (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 160.

which are expected by virtue of a covenant agreement. A covenant between Mursil, the Hittite king, and Niqmepa, king of Ugarit has been discovered at Ugarit.<sup>2</sup>

Thus speaks the Divine Sun, Mursil, Great King, king of Hattai. About that which concerns you, Niqmepa: into your country, I have brought you, and upon the throne of your father I have caused you to sit as king.

And you, Niqmepa, and the country to which I have brought you, you are my servants from this day and for days to come.

To the king of Hattai, your master, and to the land of Hattai you will be faithful (tanaššar). And as you, Niqmepa, your head, your wives, your soldiers and your country are to you valuable things, so the king, the head of the king, the son of the king, and the land of Hattai are for you forever cherished things.

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And if Niqmepa is not faithful to the terms of this treaty and to this solemn oath, may the gods, by their lives, cause Niqmepa, his wives, his sons, his grandsons, and all things which are his to vanish!

But if Niqmepa is faithful to the terms of the treaty and the oath inscribed on this tablet, may the gods, by their lives, watch over Niqmepa, his wives, his sons, his grandsons, and all things which are his.

A consideration of the treaty between Mursil and Niqmepa, the Abraham-Abimelek covenant, and other Hebrew covenant accounts is instructive. Seven main ideas seem to emerge.

1. A covenant may or may not be between equals.

Abimelek asks Abraham for a treaty, but not as an inferior. He wants to expand his influence and has some claim on the

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<sup>2</sup>Jean Nougayrol, Le Palais Royal D'Ugarit IV (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1956), p. 85 ff. The text is RS 17.338.

territory, but Abraham is already established at Beer-sheba. Abimelek reminds Abraham that he is a sojourner (gartah) in the land, and arranges a covenant which probably recognizes Abimelek's claim and insures Abraham's peaceful residence. Mursil, on the other hand, is clearly the superior. He reminds Niqmepa that he sits on his father's throne through the favor of Mursil. Clearly there is no equality between the king of Hattai and the king of Ugarit.<sup>3</sup> Mursil is the Divine Sun under whose beneficent supervision such city-state kings as Niqmepa may rule. Von Rad<sup>4</sup> has pointed out that a covenant may be imposed by the stronger upon the weaker, and that only the stronger has the freedom to decide whether or not to take the oath. The recipient, however, is not likely to act against his own interests and refuse the covenant relationship, for it is in the covenant that he has the guarantee of security. Indeed the men of Gibeon resort to trickery in order to get a covenant with Joshua for their protection.<sup>5</sup> The men of Jabesh-Gilead ask Nahash the Ammonite for a treaty, but are reluctant to accept the conditions which Nahash imposes, namely that he gouge out all

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<sup>3</sup>This fact is well established by the many records from Ugarit published in the Palais Royal D'Ugarit and the Ugaritica series.

<sup>4</sup>Gerhard von Rad, Old Testament Theology (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), II, 129.

<sup>5</sup>Joshua 9:6 ff.

their right eyes.<sup>6</sup> Ben-hadad offered Ahab the return of the cities which had belonged to Israel and the right to trade in Damascus as an inducement for a covenant.<sup>7</sup>

The covenant between Abraham and Abimelek is evidently based upon more equality. Abraham is the de facto occupant of Beer-sheba. Abimelek might have been able to defeat him in a military confrontation, but evidently is not sure enough about that to risk a loss of influence. The net result of the covenant is that Abraham is able to remain in Beer-sheba with some assurance of security, and Abimelek is able to extend his influence to the south-east without risk of a military defeat.

The covenant between Jacob and Laban was such a covenant between equals.<sup>8</sup> Neither "imposed" an agreement upon the other; it was rather entered into freely and to the advantage of both parties. When David was made king at Hebron, he entered into an equal-footing covenant with the elders of Israel.<sup>9</sup> The leaders did not have to accept David, and David did not have to accept the kingship.

2. The covenant dialogue includes the recitation of past goodness. Abimelek asked Abraham to enter into the covenant agreement on the basis of the fact that Abimelek

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<sup>6</sup>I Samuel 11:1 ff.

<sup>7</sup>I Kings 20:31 ff.

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 31:44 ff.

<sup>9</sup>II Samuel 11:1 ff.



had shown hesed to Abraham in the past. Mursil reminded Niqmepa that it was through his choosing that Niqmepa had been allowed to continue the dynasty of his father.<sup>10</sup> Jacob upbraided Laban for Laban's failure to appreciate Jacob's loyalty through twenty years of service. When Abimelek came to Isaac at Beer-sheba, he asked for a covenant "that you will do us no harm, just as we have not touched you and have done to you nothing but good and have sent you away in peace."<sup>11</sup>

3. Covenant behaviour means loyalty and faithfulness. Abimelek elicited from Abraham a promise not to deal falsely, but to do hesed. In the Hittite treaty, Mursil demanded that Niqmepa be faithful (našaru) to the king and to Hattai. The Hebrew use of the cognate našar in covenant descriptions is limited in the Old Testament to the context of the covenant between Israel and Yahweh.<sup>12</sup> Typical is Psalm 25:10.

All the paths of Yahweh are hesed and faithfulness. For those who keep (nosre) his covenant and His testimonies. Exodus 34:7 is the account of Yahweh's proclamation to Moses.

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<sup>10</sup>Mursil II actually did place Niqmepa on the throne of Ugarit to replace Arhallu in about 1330 B.C. (Mursil's 9th year). Both Niqmepa and Arhallu are sons of Niqmepa II, but Arhallu was overtly hostile to Hattai while Niqmepa remained discretely loyal. Nougayrol, p. 61 ff.

<sup>11</sup>Genesis 26:28 ff.

<sup>12</sup>The divine covenant is discussed in chapter III.

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful (rahum) and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in hesed and faithfulness, keeping (nos̄er) hesed for thousands...

While the term nos̄er hesed or some such use of nos̄er does appear in covenantal material in the Old Testament, the synonym shamar is more common. Yahweh is the God who "keeps (shomer) the covenant and hesed."<sup>13</sup> Shomer and nos̄er appear in poetic parallelism in the book of Proverbs. "He who watches (nos̄er) his mouth keeps (shomer) his life,"<sup>14</sup> and "He who preserves (shomer) his life (nos̄er) his way."<sup>15</sup>

One who enters into the covenantal agreement is obliged to guard the covenant relationship. Merely to "be mindful" of the relationship is hardly enough, as one is expected to protect the relationship and the terms of the covenant with "affirmative action." In a document which may have been a part of the tablet quoted above Mursil describes the action which he expects from Niqmepa under certain conditions.<sup>16</sup>

If Mukish, Alep, or Nuḥasshe should do an about-face and make war upon the king of Hattai so that the king of Hattai is engaged in attacking another country, if you, Niqmepa, with your soldiers and your chariots, and with all your heart you are not faithful and you do not fight, ..... Minki, Tuhusi, Ammaki, Ammizadu, Allalu, Antu, Anu, Apantu, Enlil, Ninlil,<sup>17</sup> the mountains, the

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<sup>13</sup>Deuteronomy      <sup>14</sup>Proverbs 13:3.

<sup>15</sup>Proverbs 16:17.

<sup>16</sup>RS 17.353 in Nougayrol, p. 88.

<sup>17</sup>i.e. the gods.

rivers, the springs, the Great Sea, Sin and Shamash<sup>18</sup>  
at their rising and setting are witnesses to this treaty  
and to this oath!<sup>19</sup>

The language is the usual covenant terminology. "You are not faithful" is ul tanasir, i.e. "if you do not guard the terms of the treaty..." Both right attitude and right action are expected by parties to the covenant.

In the matter of the divine covenant with Israel, Yahweh became angry with Solomon because Solomon did not keep (shomer) what Yahweh commanded.<sup>20</sup> The result of this unfaithfulness was that the kingdom would be taken from Solomon's son.

Yahweh said to Solomon, "Since...you have not kept (shomer) my covenant and statutes which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you."<sup>21</sup>

#### 4. The gods are witnesses to the covenant.

Abimelek's opening statement is, "God is with you in all that you do; now therefore swear to me here by God....."<sup>22</sup> In the Hittite treaty the Gods are called as witnesses to the oath. Numerous Hittite treaty documents contain rather stereotyped closing sections. The following is typical.

Whoever changes the words of this tablet, the thousand gods will know it. Adad of the sky, the Sun in the sky, Adad of Hattai, the Sun of Arinna, Hebat of Kizzuwatna, Ishtar of Alalah, Ningal of Nubanni, Adad of Mount Hazi, ---they will know it!<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>The moon and the sun. <sup>19</sup>RS 17.353:18-24, 5'-8'.

<sup>20</sup>I Kings 11:10. <sup>21</sup>I Kings 11:11.

<sup>22</sup>Genesis 21:22-23. <sup>23</sup>RS 17.340, RS 17.237, etc.

When the men of Gibeon tricked Joshua into a covenant, some of the members of the congregation complained that Joshua did not kill them after discovering that they had made misrepresentations. But the leaders of the congregation answered, "We have sworn to them by Yahweh, the God of Israel, and now we may not touch them."<sup>24</sup> Even the tribal covenants were witnesses by the gods and became a part of the divine order of things. To break a treaty agreement was not only to arouse the anger of the other party, but also to anger the gods who would surely mete out appropriate punishments.

5. The treaty is sealed with oaths and rituals. In the Hittite document Mursil insists that Niqmepa must be loyal not only to the treaty (riksu) but also to the oath (mamitu). The Abraham-Abimelek story concludes with an account of the covenant ritual in which the parties swear an oath.<sup>25</sup> In the parallel story of Abimelek and Isaac, the covenant ritual includes a feast and the swearing of the oath.<sup>26</sup>

6. Covenant-mindedness involves both attitude and action. Abimelek asked Abraham "to do hesed with him as opposed to doing sheqer---dealing falsely. The nature of this covenant-mindedness is underscored somewhat by the Hittite treaty discussed above. Mursil tells Niqmepa

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<sup>24</sup>Joshua 9:19.

<sup>25</sup>Genesis 21:27-31.

<sup>26</sup>Genesis 26:28 ff.

As for you, Niqmepa, your life,<sup>27</sup> your wives, your soldiers, and your country are for you cherished things (agratakku), as the king himself, the life of the king, the sons of the king, and Hattai are forever for you cherished things.<sup>28</sup>

The covenantal relationship is one in which the concerns of the other party become as one's own concerns. Hesed is the kind of relationship one might have with a member of one's own tribe or family. To do hesed is to treat the other party---perhaps an outsider---as a member of one's own in-group. The Akkadian waqaru signifies "to be valuable" or "to be precious."<sup>29</sup> The Hebrew yaqar carries essentially the same force. Psalm 36:8 reads, mah-yaqar hasdeka elohim: "How precious is Thy hesed, O God!" Yaqar is not to be understood merely as objectively "valuable," but as subjective concern. Psalm 116:15 reads "Precious (yaqar) in the eyes of Yahweh is the death of his saints. Clearly the death of the hasidim is not to be cherished, but is a matter of concern to Yahweh. Leviticus 10:17-18 describes this in-group concern.

You shall not hate your brother in your heart, but you shall reason with your own people, and you shall not bear sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance or bear any grudge against the sons of your own people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself. I am Yahweh.

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<sup>27</sup>gaqqad-ka, Lit: "your head."

<sup>28</sup>RS 11.338:5-7.

<sup>29</sup>Rene Labat, Manuel D'Epigraphie Akkadienne (Paris: Imprimerie Nationale, 1963), p. 295.

The distinction between the tribal member and non-member can hardly be missed. It is the "brother," the "neighbor," the "sons of your own people" who must be treated with a love which is like one's concern for oneself. The in-group members are treated with hesed; the covenant relationship is to extend this hesed to an outsider. When Jonathan foresaw the irreparable schism between the house of David and the house of Saul and wished to remain in favor with the house of David, he asked David for a covenant.

"If I am still alive, do with me the hesed of Yahweh that I may not die; and do not cut off your hesed from my house forever. . . . Let not the name of Jonathan be cut off from the house of David." And Jonathan made David swear by his love for him; for he loved him as he loved his own soul.<sup>30</sup>

After Jonathan's death David remembered the covenant he had made and kept hesed with Jonathan in his treatment of Mephibosheth, Jonathan's son. The circumstances were fortuitous for David, as he could spare the life of a crippled son of a pretender to the throne without endangering his own dynasty. His words about his oath to Jonathan are in hesed language.

And David said, "Is there still anyone left of the house of Saul that I may do with him hesed for Jonathan's sake?"<sup>31</sup>

David brought Mephibosheth to his household, and restored to him all that had belonged to Saul. And Mephibosheth "ate at

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<sup>30</sup>I Samuel 20:14-17.

<sup>31</sup>II Samuel 9:1.

the king's table."<sup>32</sup> The point here is that in doing hesed David accorded to Mephibosheth treatment as one of his own household. In a similar vein Gibeonites were allowed to participate in tribal life after they are granted the covenant relationship. Because of the deception and the displeasure involved, they were given the status of "hewers of wood and drawers of water,"<sup>33</sup> but they were nevertheless technically recipients of hesed; they were participating members of the tribe.

David's relationship with Hanun, king of the Ammonites, did not fare so well. David determined to do hesed with Hanun because Hanun's father, Nahash, had done hesed with David. What the nature of the relationship between David and Nahash may have been is not related in the Old Testament. He was the king who beseiged Jabesh-gilead<sup>34</sup> but who was finally routed by Saul. It may be that the enmity between Saul and Nahash became the basis for a covenant between David and Nahash. But Hanun did not trust David, so he met David's overture of hesed with contempt. He disgraced David's messengers by shaving off half their beards and cutting off their garments at the hips. Then he hired Syrian mercenaries to fight Israel.<sup>35</sup>

The hesed relationship implies by its nature that

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<sup>32</sup>II Samuel 9:13.

<sup>33</sup>Joshua 9:21.

<sup>34</sup>I Samuel 11:1.

<sup>35</sup>II Samuel 10.

one cannot do hesed with everyone at once. The idea of loyalty is indeed a major part of the meaning of the term. When Absalom was joined in his rebellion by Hushai the Archite, a reputed friend of David, Absalom greeted him with contempt: "Is this your hesed with your friend?"<sup>36</sup> Even in his attempt to usurp to kingdom his father, Absalom's sensitivities to the hesed relationship were operative.

David's last words to Solomon include some advice about dealing with friends and enemies.

But do hesed with the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for so they came to me in my fleeing from Absalom, your brother.<sup>37</sup>

It is apparent from the examples and the discussion that hesed involves a covenantal relationship between houses--- a relationship which implies treating another's house or dynasty as though its members were members of one's own family.

#### 7. Remembrance is a part of covenant mindedness.

As Absalom was disgusted with Hashai's failure to remember his hesed with David, so the Chronicler was critical of Joash's approval of the execution of Zechariah the priest. Joash had been rescued from Athaliah's slaughter of the members of the house of Ahab by his Aunt Jehosheba and the priest Jehoiada who hid him in a storage room for several

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<sup>36</sup>II Samuel 16:7.

<sup>37</sup>I Kings 2:7.



years. After Joash was made king, and for as long as Jehoiada lived, Yahwism was the official religion of Judah. But upon the death of the old priest, Joash adopted Baalism. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was openly critical of this abandonment of the prophetic Hebrew religion. For his criticism he was stoned in the court of the temple. The Chronicler writes, "Thus Joash the king did not remember the hesed which Jehoiada, the father of Zechariah, had done with him, but killed his son."<sup>38</sup>

That hesed is a relationship to be remembered and reciprocated is clear from several Old Testament stories. In addition to the above accounts, there are such records as that of Joseph in prison in Egypt. Joseph interpreted the dream of the chief butler, also a prisoner, and asked him, "Remember me when it is good with you, and please do hesed with me and remember me to Pharaoh and cause me to go forth out of this house."<sup>39</sup> The butler owed Joseph a favor; unfortunately it was two years before circumstances jarred his memory, and he remembered that Joseph has interpreted his dream. He said to Pharaoh, "I remember my faults to-day."<sup>40</sup> The fault was that he forgot hesed. Hesed is to be remembered. Forgetting hesed is a blot on the character of the individual and serious transgression on the part of

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<sup>38</sup>II Kings 11:1-3.

<sup>39</sup>Genesis 40:14.

<sup>40</sup>Genesis 41:9.

the community. The structure of the book of Judges is that Israel periodically forgot Yahweh; Yahweh sent an oppressor; Israel cried for help; Yahweh sent a deliverer; Israel forgot again, and the cycle was repeated. The conclusion of the Gideon stories is of interest here.

As soon as Gideon died, the people of Israel turned again and played the harlot after the Baals and made Baal-berith their god. And the people of Israel did not remember Yahweh, their God, who had rescued them from the hand of all their enemies on every side; and they did not do hesed to the family of Jerrubbaal (that is, Gideon) in return for all the good that he had done to Israel.<sup>41</sup>

The hesed transgression here is double: it is against both Yahweh and the family of Gideon.

Amos condemns Tyre "because they did not remember the covenant of brothers"<sup>42</sup>

One of the attributes of Yahweh which elicits the praise of the Psalmist is that His hesed endures forever.<sup>43</sup> Man may forget hesed, but Yahweh does not.

In the ancient Near East, the regulation of life and the cohesiveness of society was accomplished through various agreements, ranging from covenants between individuals to international treaties with far-reaching political implications. Hesed is the noun by which the Hebrew could conceptualize the nature of these obligations. It is to be noted

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<sup>41</sup>Judges 8:33-35.      <sup>42</sup>Amos 1:9.

<sup>43</sup>Psalm 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, etc.

that the hesed relationship is never a unilateral affair. Even where the word may appear to denote merely "kindness," there is reciprocity involved. The lex talonis is not merely negative; it is not only "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth,"<sup>44</sup> but also a favor for a favor. The Hebrew spies who were hidden by Rahab incurred an obligation. Rahab pressed them, "As I have done hesed with you, you will do hesed with my father's house....and deliver our lives from death."<sup>45</sup> The men responded, "Our life for yours!" But it is not a forfeited life for a forfeited life; it is a saved life for a saved life. In a similar vein, when the Joseph tribes attacked Bethel, they made a covenant with a resident: if he would show them how to get into the city, they would do hesed with him. The meaning of the offer was evidently quite clear; the man showed them the way into the city, and they let his family escape the destruction.<sup>46</sup> When Saul was preparing to attack the city of Amalek, he sent word to the Kenites living there to evacuate, for they had done hesed with Israel, and he did not want to fail to return hesed. Between Israel and the Amalekites there had never been any hesed. The banner commemorating the battle at Rephidim was inscribed, "Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation."<sup>47</sup> The enmity is recorded in

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<sup>44</sup>Exodus 21:24.

<sup>45</sup>Joshua 2:12.

<sup>46</sup>Judges 1:24.

<sup>47</sup>Exodus 17:16.

Deuteronomy, "Remember what Amalek did to you on the way as you came out of Egypt....You shall blot out the remembrance of Amalek from under heaven; you shall not forget."<sup>48</sup> Samuel's instruction to Saul before the destruction of Amalek is, "Thus says Yahweh, 'I will punish what Amalek did to Israel.....Now go smite Amalek and utterly destroy all that they have.'"<sup>49</sup>

Hesed is used to denote the binding agreements which partners may make for whatever reason. When Abraham was afraid for his life because of Sarah, he said to her, "This is the hesed you must do with me: at every place to which we come, say of me, 'He is my brother'"<sup>50</sup>

Hesed is a recognition of the inter-dependence of persons. To violate this basic trust is unthinkable because it threatens the very fabric of society. Absalom no doubt needed all the good men he could find, but Hushai was suspect because he had apparently violated hesed.<sup>51</sup> As the story unfolds, we may assume that the apparent violation was a ruse, and that Hushai actually remained loyal to David.<sup>52</sup>

Hesed is dependable relationship, the very mortar of society.

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<sup>48</sup>Deuteronomy 25:17-19.

<sup>49</sup>I Samuel 15:2-3.

<sup>50</sup>Genesis 21:13.

<sup>51</sup>II Samuel 16:17.

<sup>52</sup>II Samuel 17:15.

## Chapter III

HESED THEOLOGIZED

For Israel hesed was the special relationship of Yahweh to his people. The attempt in the last chapter to show hesed as a quality of social relationship without reference to the nature of Israel's relationship to Yahweh was not entirely satisfactory because there is no extant Hebrew writing in which the author did not understand hesed in terms of the relationship between God and his covenanted people. Long before any written tradition existed, the theologized ideal hesed had shaped the social tradition of Israel. The hesed of man is only a poor copy of the hesed of Yahweh.

HESED AS YAHWEH'S ACTION

In the Old Testament tradition, hesed is not primarily what man does; it is what Yahweh does. In the story about Lot and Zoar, Lot thanks the messengers of Yahweh with the words, "Behold, your servant has found favor in your sight, and you have done great hesed with me in saving my life."<sup>1</sup> Even in this early tradition the deity does hesed.

Hesed is what those who call upon the name of Yahweh expect of him. When Abraham's servant was sent to the city

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<sup>1</sup>Genesis 19:19.

of Nahor to find a suitable wife for Isaac, he prayed for Yahweh's guidance in terms of hesed: "O Yahweh, God of my lord Abraham, grant me success today and do hesed with my lord Abraham."<sup>2</sup> This prayer gives only a hint of the hesed relationship between Yahweh and Abraham. The word is not used in the earlier election and covenant passages in Genesis<sup>3</sup> with the exception of the story of Abraham's covenant with Abimelek<sup>4</sup> which is not related to the accounts of the covenant with Yahweh. But when Abraham's servant saw that his mission might be successful, he prayed again, this time in almost stereotyped hesed-covenant language: "Blessed be Yahweh, the God of my lord Abraham who has not forsaken his hesed and his faithfulness ('emeth) with my lord."<sup>5</sup> In the Psalms, hesed and 'emeth are frequently paired or paralleled.<sup>6</sup> The Psalmist understood the close relationship of these words. Yahweh's doing hesed cannot be understood apart from his dependability in doing it. The hesed relationship is not an on-off thing; in fact, it is not even

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<sup>2</sup>Genesis 24:12.

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 15:5, 7-20; 16:10, 17:1-22, 18:19, 22:15-18.

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 19:22-24.

<sup>5</sup>Genesis 24:27.

<sup>6</sup>The terms are paired in Psalms 25:10, 40:10-11, 85:10, 89:24, 138:2, and in the apocryphal "Hymn to the Creator," (11QPs<sup>a</sup> 26:10). They are paralleled in Psalm 26:3, 36:5, 69:14, 88:11, 89:1, 33, 49; 100:5, 108:4, 117:2.

revokable.<sup>7</sup> The servant used the same terminology when putting the question to Laban and Bethuel: "If you will do hesed and 'emeth with my lord, tell me..."<sup>8</sup> Here the meaning is that Laban and Bethuel will enter into a contractual relationship with Abraham, but the language is the same as that used in describing Yahweh's relationship to his faithful. The Old Testament understanding of all hesed is that it is defined by Yahweh's hesed; hence all hesed is in a sense the hesed of Yahweh. The account of David and Jonathan is of interest at this point. As noted above, when David came to power he was mindful of his covenant with Jonathan. He inquired whether there was anyone left from the house of Saul that he might do him hesed for Jonathan's sake. When he put the question to Ziba, he asked whether there might be someone with whom he could do hesed elohim, the hesed of God.<sup>9</sup> The covenant was between David and Jonathan, but the quality of the relationship was what it was because Yahweh was in it. And even in fulfilling a personal promise, David seemed to be conscious of himself as an instrumentality by which Yahweh's hesed was actualized.

In a somewhat opposite way, the hesed of Yahweh is the catalyst which makes for favorable human relations. The stories of Joseph and of Daniel serve as cases in point.

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<sup>7</sup>Annie Jaubert, La Notion D'Alliance dans le Judaisme aux Abords de L'Ere Chretienne (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963), p. 59.

<sup>8</sup>Genesis 24:49.      <sup>9</sup>II Samuel 9:3.

While Joseph was in prison for his alleged assault upon the wife of Potiphar, he fared well because "Yahweh was with Joseph and extended hesed to him and gave him favor in the sight of the warden."<sup>10</sup> Those whom the gods favor are to be favored!

The wording in the parallel phrase in the Daniel story is somewhat different. Daniel asked the chief of the eunuchs for permission to eat only kosher food. The eunuch was dubious about tampering with the king's command, but "God gave Daniel for hesed and for rahamim (mercies) before the chief of the eunuchs."<sup>11</sup> The force of the Hebrew prepositions is not easily rendered into English, but it is clear that the hesed and rahamim of Yahweh gave Daniel hesed and rahamim with the chief of the eunuchs. The result was that Daniel was able to continue his religious dietary practices. The message is that of course Yahweh would extend hesed to one who was strict in observance of the torah.

Arthur Jeffery has pointed out that Jewish heroes are often depicted as standing in royal favor.<sup>12</sup> It is of importance here to note that this favor is in effect a gift from God; it is a part of His hesed. Yahweh sometimes does

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<sup>10</sup>Genesis 39:21.

<sup>11</sup>Daniel 1:9.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur Jeffery, "The Book of Daniel," in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1956), VI, 369. Other Biblical heroes in royal favor are Joseph, Esther, Ezra, and Nehemiah. Judith's ability to win the instant favor of General Holofernes is certainly in the same tradition.



hesed through another. As David was consciously the instrument of the hesed of God, so Daniel receives the hesed of Yahweh through the hesed of the chief of the eunuchs.

The paralleling of hesed with rahamim instead of 'emeth throws a somewhat different light on hesed. Hesed we'emeth underscores the absolute dependability of God's keeping the covenant relationship with His people. Rahamim indicates that which is not necessarily deserved, but which is given out of compassion. It brings to mind the fact of man's helplessness before God. The covenant is clearly between unequals. Man can do nothing; God does everything.

Both 'emeth and rahamim are essential to the full meaning of hesed. "Faithfulness" is essential to the notion of the inviolability of the covenant relationship. What is sworn is sworn forever. But "mercy" is also a part of the dynamic. Not all that comes from God is deserved, and God's mercy is a constant reminder that workable relationships must be developed not so much on retribution (you get what you deserve because of what you did) as on attribution (you get what you need because of what you are.)<sup>13</sup> The prayer of Jacob (Genesis 32:9-12) betrays an awareness of this dynamic. Jacob recounts his obedience to the word of God, then declares himself unworthy of the goodness which has been shown to him. "I am not worthy of the least of all the heseds

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<sup>13</sup>Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 64.

(hasadim) and all 'emeth which Thou hast done with Thy servant."<sup>14</sup> He prays for deliverance from Esau, and finally reminds God of the covenant given to Abraham and Isaac: "I will make your descendants as the sand of the sea which cannot be numbered for multitude."<sup>15</sup> Jacob appeals both to the raham of God for deliverance and to the 'emeth of God for assurance of His continuing protection. He wants to know that the covenant is still in force.

The experience of Ezra was similar to that of Joseph and Daniel in that (1) he found himself in a foreign country, (2) he had to deal with the king, and (3) God showed him hesed which resulted in the king's being swayed to do whatever was needed. When Ezra received his commission to go to Jerusalem, he understood the actuality of the hesed of Yahweh as the putting of "such a thing as this into the heart of the king."<sup>16</sup> Aside from the brief liturgy at the laying of the foundation of the temple,<sup>17</sup> the word hesed appears twice in the book of Ezra. In both instances it is used in the sense of Yahweh extending hesed "before the king." The hesed was extended to Ezra, but the goal was a desired behaviour on the part of the king. When Ezra was appraised that the "holy people" had intermarried with the "peoples of the land," he offered a prayer of confession

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<sup>14</sup>Genesis 32:10.

<sup>15</sup>Genesis 32:12.

<sup>16</sup>Ezra 8:27-28.

<sup>17</sup>Ezra 3:11.

which contained the words, "Yet in our bondage our God has not forsaken us, but has extended to us hesed before the kings of Persia to grant us some reviving to set up the house of our God..."<sup>18</sup> The formula is clear: Yahweh extends hesed over X before Y in order that Y might do such and such for X. Thus could Joseph get out of jail, Daniel remain an observant Jew, and Ezra rebuilt the temple.

The vision of the prophets is a broad one. Yahweh does hesed not so only with individuals but also with a people or with the land. Jeremiah writes:

Thus Yahweh has spoken:  
 "Let the wise man not boast of his wisdom,  
 Let the mighty man not boast of his might,  
 Let the rich man not boast of his riches;  
 But in this let the boaster boast:  
 That he understands and knows me,---That I, Yahweh,  
 do hesed, justice and righteousness in the land.  
 For in these I take delight, says Yahweh."<sup>19</sup>

Hesed here is teamed with mishpat and zedeqah, two words central to the Hebrew ethical vocabulary. Hesed is clearly an ethical concept. Yahweh does hesed not only with his people, but also "in the land." This may be nothing more than a way of denoting the nation, but one is tempted to see in it a regard for the land itself. A similar phrase occurs in the dialogue of Abraham and Abimelek previously discussed.<sup>20</sup> Abimelek says

According to the hesed which I have done with you, you will do with me and with the land in which you sojourn.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Ezra 9:9.

<sup>19</sup>Jeremiah 9:23-24.

<sup>20</sup>Supra, p. 12.

<sup>21</sup>Genesis 21:23.

It is almost certain that this reference is not to a political entity, but to the land as such. In the Hittite treaty between Mursil II and Niqmepa,<sup>22</sup> Mursil admonishes Niqmepa:

From this day and for all the days that follow, the king of Hattai, your master, and the land of Hattai you will watch over.<sup>23</sup>

Here našsar is easily understood as carrying a similar force as hesed when applied to the land. What is more difficult in this text is the fact that the orientation is very political and the text is easily understood in a purely political sense. Mat al hatti is simply the kingdom of the Hittites.

The idea that the actions of men, especially violence, might effect a curse upon the land is not foreign to the Old Testament. The violence of Cain brought a curse upon the earth so that it would not yield.<sup>24</sup> Huldah the prophetess warned Josiah that Yahweh would bring evil upon the land because the people had burned incense to other gods.<sup>25</sup> The refugees in Egypt insisted that evil times had come upon the land because they had ceased to burn incense and pour libations to the Queen of Heaven.<sup>26</sup> But Jeremiah argues that evil has come because they did worship the Queen of Heaven, and so the land had become a waste and a curse.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>RS 17.353. Supra p. 17.

<sup>23</sup>RS 17.353:4-5. Nougayrol, p. 88.

<sup>24</sup>Genesis 4:11. <sup>25</sup>II Kings 22:14-17.

<sup>26</sup>Jeremiah 44:15-18. <sup>27</sup>Jeremiah 44:20-22.

The antithesis of violating the land or bringing a curse upon it is surely doing hesed in the land.

#### THE PERMANENCE OF HESED

Since the idea of hesed is inseparably tied to the idea of covenant, the development of the former must of necessity follow that of the latter. It has been clear in the discussion of covenant and hesed that there is an intrinsic notion of permanence. Covenants are forever.<sup>28</sup> But the permanence of a covenant is by definition dependent upon the keeping of the terms of the agreement. The prophets understood Israel's part of the covenant as doing righteousness and justice.<sup>29</sup> For failure to live up to the covenant agreement, Israel would be destroyed.<sup>30</sup> But all of this is to lay emphasis upon human activity as the basis for the continuation of the nation. To the priests this was unthinkable.<sup>31</sup> Yahweh would cleanse the land,<sup>32</sup> and establish His people in it forever.<sup>33</sup> The covenant would be

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<sup>28</sup>RS 17.407:3'-4', 17.338:4-5. Nougayrol, pp. 85, 88, 91.

<sup>29</sup>Isaiah 1:17, 21, 27; 5:7, Amos 1:9, Micah 6:8.

<sup>30</sup>Amos 8:2, 9:7-8a.

<sup>31</sup>I.G. Matthews, The Religious Pilgrimage of Israel (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), p. 201.

<sup>32</sup>Leviticus 25:4-7, 10b-12.

<sup>33</sup>Leviticus 25:23, Jeremiah 12:7, 35:12, 48:3-4.

an everlasting covenant, not for the sake of Israel, but for the sake of Yahweh's holy name.<sup>34</sup> The everlasting covenant was completely unilateral. The Sinai covenant had involved mutual responsibilities on the part of Yahweh and Israel. This had failed, but the new covenant would be guaranteed by the power of Yahweh, the only power that could insure ultimate triumph.<sup>35</sup>

This new concept of covenant could not but involve a new concept of hesed. Hesed became not so much the nature of the relationship between God and man, as the nature of Yahweh himself. In the priestly view, Yahweh established the covenant unilaterally with Abraham long before the foundation of the Hebrew kingdom.<sup>36</sup> Hesed is then the dependable and perpetual nature of Yahweh's favor upon Israel. Isaiah emphasizes this point of the everlasting nature of hesed:

In overflowing wrath for a moment  
I hid my face from you,  
But with everlasting hesed I will  
have compassion on you,  
Says your redeemer, Yahweh.<sup>37</sup>

And further on:

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<sup>34</sup>Ezekiel 36:21-25, 20:9, 14:22, Exodus 32:11-14.

<sup>35</sup>Matthews, p. 201.

<sup>36</sup>This phenomenon is usually discussed as "election."

<sup>37</sup>Isaiah 54:8.

For the mountains may depart  
 and the hills be removed.  
 But my hesed shall not depart from you,  
 and my covenant of peace shall not be removed,  
 Says Yahweh who has compassion on you.<sup>38</sup>

Yahweh established hesed from the beginning and declared that it would always be. This is a main theme of the hesed passages in the psalms.

Although the prophets do not understand hesed as a unilateral relationship, and contend that the survival of Israel is contingent upon her doing justice and righteousness, they consistently affirm Yahweh's patience and the continuing of his hesed even in the face of Israel's sinfulness. Yahweh will destroy the land, but not quite.<sup>39</sup> The people go into exile, but a remnant shall return.<sup>40</sup> Jeremiah promises restoration after the exile, and of the survivors he writes,

With an everlasting love I have loved you;  
 Therefore I continue hesed to you.  
 Again I will build you, and you shall be built,  
 O virgin Israel!<sup>41</sup>

#### THE ATTRIBUTE PAR EXCELLENCE

The forgoing discussion noted the movement from a covenant relationship which depended upon both sides keeping agreements and responsibilities to an understanding of a

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<sup>38</sup>Isaiah 54:10.                      <sup>39</sup>Amos 9:8.

<sup>40</sup>Isaiah 6:13, 7:3, 10:20-23.

<sup>41</sup>Jeremiah 31:3b.

unilateral action on the part of Yahweh in which he initiates and keeps covenant. It is his action and power, not the activity of Israel, which can save the nation. In this view hesed became the attribute par excellence of Yahweh. Indeed Yahweh is hesed.<sup>42</sup>

When Moses encountered Yahweh on the mountain, Yahweh passed before him and proclaimed himself:

Yahweh, Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in (rab) hesed and faithfulness ('emeth), keeping (noşer) hesed for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and fourth generation.<sup>43</sup>

This self-proclamation of Yahweh became almost a stylized or liturgical definition of his character. He is the God of mercy and grace, great hesed and faithfulness. His justice may demand that the sins of the fathers be visited upon the children for three or four generations, but his hesed is for the thousands. The passage seems to have become a part of the liturgy of confession and pardon. When the spies brought back a discouraging report from Canaan and the people urged a return to Egypt, Yahweh became angry with Israel and threatened to strike them with a plague and disinherit them.<sup>44</sup> But Moses offered a prayer of inter-

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<sup>42</sup>Jacob Jocz, The Covenant, a Theology of Human Destiny (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 77.

<sup>43</sup>Exodus 34:6b-7.

<sup>44</sup>Numbers 14:12.



cession, reminding Yahweh of His own nature: "Yahweh is slow to anger, and abounding in hesed, forgiving iniquity and transgression, but he will by no means clear the guilty.....Pardon the iniquity of this people, I pray thee, according to the greatness of Thy hesed."<sup>45</sup>

Here the emphasis shifts slightly. Yahweh does hesed because it is his nature to do so. He did not destroy Israel because to do so would have brought shame upon his own name. The nations would have heard of it and doubted the power and glory of Yahweh.<sup>46</sup>

The ninth chapter of the book of Nehemiah relates the celebration of the Feast of Succoth in which the congregation "confessed their sins and the iniquities of their fathers."<sup>47</sup> At the close of the recitation, Ezra recites the prayer for pardon: "But thou art a God ready to forgive, gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in hesed."<sup>48</sup> Nehemiah set the guard for the gates for the sabbath, then offered his prayer, "...spare me according to the abundance of thy hesed. (...kerob hasdeka).<sup>49</sup> The notion of the rab hesed of Yahweh became fixed in the liturgy of Israel and was understood as a defining quality of Yahweh himself. The phrase is used by Joel in his poetic plea for

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<sup>45</sup>Numbers 14:18-19a.

<sup>46</sup>Numbers 14:13-16.

<sup>47</sup>Nehemiah 9:2.

<sup>48</sup>Nehemiah 9:17b.

<sup>49</sup>Nehemiah 13:22b.

a return to Yahweh:

Return to Yahweh, your God,  
for he is gracious and merciful,  
Slow to anger, and abounding in hesed  
and repents of evil.<sup>50</sup>

Here the tone has shifted from a rather even balance between hesed and retributive justice (Exodus 34:6-9) to an emphasis upon hesed with less stress upon the punishment of iniquities. In fact Jonah was distressed because Yahweh showed too much hesed! When his preaching mission was successful and the citizens of Nineveh repented, Jonah was angry that Yahweh did not destroy the city:

"For I knew that thou art a gracious God and merciful,  
slow to anger, and abounding in hesed, and repentest  
of evil. Therefore, O Yahweh, take my life from me  
...."<sup>51</sup>

The "rab hesed" formula is definitive; it is how Israel comes to understand the nature of Yahweh.

The parallel statement without the rab hesed phrase occurs in Exodus 20:5b-6 and Deuteronomy 5:9b-10. Here the emphasis is again strongly upon the punishment of evil doers.

I, Yahweh, your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children to the third and the fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing hesed to thousands of those who love me and keep my commandments.

The setting is within that of the Sinaitic covenant, in which the hesed relationship is contingent upon Israel's keeping the commandments. The contrast between the present

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<sup>50</sup> Joel 2:13.

<sup>51</sup> Jonah 4:2-3a.

statement and the Exodus 34:6b-7 statement is clear: in the present statement hesed is covenant-mindedness and calls Israel to be faithful to her responsibilities. In the Exodus 34 statement, hesed is an attribute of Yahweh. The rab hesed statement is repeated in post-exilic writings in which the priestly influence has been felt. Only the Exodus 20 statement appears in Deuteronomy.<sup>52</sup> The Deuteronomist understands hesed only in terms of keeping covenant. It is contingent upon Israel's choosing to be faithful to Yahweh.<sup>53</sup> The proclamation of the nature of Yahweh is Deuteronomy 7:9-10a.

Know therefore that Yahweh, your God, is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and hesed with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations, and requites to their faces those who hate him, by destroying them.

Here the pairing of hesed and berith indicates clearly that the Deuteronomist's view of hesed is strictly covenant relationship. Yahweh is the God who keeps hesed for those who keep the commandments. This defining statement finds its way in apocoped form into Nehemiah in Ezra's prayer of confession:

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<sup>52</sup>Deuteronomy 5:9b-10.

<sup>53</sup>cf. Deuteronomy 28:1 ff. "And if you obey the voice of Yahweh, your God, being careful to do all his commandments....these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you...." And 28:15 ff. "But if you will not obey the voice of Yahweh....then these curses shall come upon you and overtake you..."

Now therefore our God, the great and mighty and terrible God, who keepest covenant and hesed, ...<sup>54</sup>

Again the emphasis in the restatements of the defining proclamations of Yahweh shift toward the hesed and away from the threats to the unfaithful.

Hesed became a defining characteristic of Yahweh. In the E tradition, restated by the Deuteronomist, it is Yahweh's nature to do hesed with those who keep his commandments. In what was probably a J tradition, reaffirmed by later priestly writers, Yahweh abounds in hesed. He does hesed for his own name's sake, i.e., because it is his nature to do hesed, not because Israel has brought it about through her good deeds.

#### HESED AS ROYAL POSSESSION

It is a remarkable fact that for more than four hundred years the center of Judean political power was the Davidic dynasty. Saul had been unable to found a dynasty, and the efforts of the Northern rebels to establish an enduring line of kingship was something less than successful. The stability of the Davidic line was surely founded something more than the popularity of David with his subjects. It rested, in fact, upon a belief that Yahweh had

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<sup>54</sup>Nehemiah 9:32.

made a covenant with David at the time of his coronation in Jerusalem.<sup>55</sup> The statement of this covenant is II Samuel 7:8b-6.

Thus says Yahweh Sebaoth, I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, that you should be prince over my people Israel; and I have been with you wherever you went, and have cut off your enemies from before you; and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth. And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place, and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more, as formerly, from the time that I appointed judges over my people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. Moreover, Yahweh declares to you that Yahweh will make you a house. When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your son after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. When he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, with the stripes of the sons of men; but I will not take my hesed from him as I took it from Saul, whom I put away from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me; your throne shall be established forever.

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<sup>55</sup>Ronald Clements, Abraham and David, Genesis 15 and its Meaning for Israelite Tradition (London: SCM Press, 1967, p. 52.

The parallel between this covenant and the covenant with Abraham is striking. The covenant terms may be arranged in parallel columns:

## II Samuel 7

Thus says Yahweh: ....I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep....

and I will make for you a great name, like the name of the great ones of the earth.

And I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in their own place,

and be disturbed no more; and violent men shall afflict them no more....

I will raise up your son after you, who shall come forth from your body....

I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.... but I will not take my hesed from him as I took it from Saul.

## Genesis 12 and 15

I am Yahweh, who brought you from UR of the Chaldeans.... (15:7)

And I will make of you a great nation and will bless you and make your name great.... (12:2)

To your descendants I give this land. (12:7)

I am your shield. (15:1)

Your own son shall be your heir. (15:4)

On that day Yahweh made a covenant with Abraham. (15:18)

Both the covenant to David and the covenant to Abraham are covenants without condition. The continuing favor of Yahweh does not depend upon keeping the law. Hesed is promised to the dynasty of David even when the king commits iniquity. The relationship is the father-son relationship in which appropriate chastening may be forthcoming, but the relation-

ship will not be broken. Jaubert<sup>56</sup> has noted that what is involved here is both a covenant and an oath.<sup>57</sup> If there are in fact "terms" of the covenant, i.e. actions agreed to by both parties, it is that Yahweh will ensure David's house (dynasty), and David's son will build Yahweh's house (temple). In this way the Davidic dynasty is firmly tied to the Jerusalem temple. Thus the Psalmist can write:

I am installed as his king  
On Zion (his?) holy hill.<sup>58</sup>

Clements<sup>59</sup> understands the Abrahamic and the Davidic covenants as coming from a common tradition which is centered in Hebron. It is there that David is first made king over Judah.<sup>60</sup> The Davidic covenant was surely related to existing ideas about Israel's relationship to Yahweh. But this covenant must be distinguished from the Sinaitic covenant. The latter involved the very important condition of keeping the law. It is this tradition which underlies the prophetic understanding of covenant and hesed: covenant is an agreement with obligations on both sides, and may be broken by a failure to live up to the obligations. Hesed is in this

<sup>56</sup>Jaubert, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup>Covenant: II Samuel 23:5, II Chronicles 13:5, 21:7, Psalms 89:3, 28, 39. Oath: Psalms 89:3, 132:11.

<sup>58</sup>Psalms 2:6. RVS: "I have set my king on Zion, my holy hill."

<sup>59</sup>Clements, p. 47 ff.

<sup>60</sup>II Samuel 2:1-4.

understanding basically "loyalty" between the parties involved and faithfulness to the terms of the covenant. But hesed in the Davidic covenant is clearly something which Yahweh gives to his chosen one and withholds from his enemies. Hesed was withdrawn from Saul, but promised to the house of David forever. The termination of the covenant is not an option in the Abrahamic-Davidic understanding.

Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple is essentially a reaffirmation of the Davidic covenant.<sup>61</sup>

O Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above or in earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing hesed to Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their hearts; who hast kept with Thy servant David my father what Thou didst declare to him;.....Now therefore, O God of Israel, let Thy word be confirmed, which Thou hast spoken to Thy servant David my father.<sup>62</sup>

The redaction of the prayer in II Chronicles concludes with, "Remember Thy hesed for David Thy servant." (6:42b)

If the J tradition of the Abrahamic covenant finds fulfillment in the Davidic covenant, then the Abraham tradition may be seen as supporting a Jerusalem theology. The Abrahamic covenant tradition includes the provision that "By you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves."<sup>63</sup> The nations surrounding Israel may share in the goodness promised by the covenant only through the benevo-

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<sup>61</sup>I Kings 8:23-53. II Chronicles 6:14-42.

<sup>62</sup>I Kings 8:23-24a, 26.

<sup>63</sup>Genesis 12:3b, 22:18, 26:4b, 28:14b.



lence of the possessors of the promise. Perpetual hesed is promised to the house of David. Those who would share the blessings of the covenant of prosperity must look to Jerusalem and to the Davidic dynasty.<sup>64</sup> Thus the hesed to David established the Davidic king as the eternal source of Yahweh's blessing for Israel, and by extension for the nations of the earth.

### HESED AS VIRTUE

Just as ascribing particular attributes to deity is a way of giving cosmic standing to certain values, so the notion of the hesed of Yahweh carries within it an implication for human virtue. Not only does Yahweh do hesed, but Yahweh requires hesed. Both Micah and Hosea depict Yahweh as favoring hesed over sacrifice. Prophetic religion was the cult of the ethical, and the epitome of that ethic is hesed.<sup>65</sup> Micah makes the point clear.

With what shall I come before Yahweh,  
and bow myself before God on high?  
.....

He has showed you, O man, what is good;  
and what does Yahweh require of you  
But to do mishpat, to love hesed  
and to walk humbly with your God?<sup>66</sup>

<sup>64</sup>Clements, p. 58 ff.

<sup>65</sup>Jean L'Hour, La Morale de L'Alliance, (Paris: Gabalda, 1966), pp. 28, 57 ff. He does not use the term "Cult of the Ethical, but his discussion would seem to imply that the term is legitimate.

<sup>66</sup>Micah 6:6a.

L'Hour is probably correct in his rendering of hesed in this passage as "loyalty."<sup>67</sup> He understands mishpat as the horizontal relational dimension (justice to one's fellow man), and hesed as the vertical dimension (loyalty to God). There is much to support this view as far as it goes. Hesed indeed carries the idea of intense loyalty, and that loyalty may be understood primarily as loyalty to God. But the idea of hesed is not limited to loyalty, nor is its object limited to God. We have already noted that hesed includes such concepts as faithfulness, righteousness, mercy, and justice, as well as loyalty. To limit hesed to one of these aspects is to miss the richness of the word.<sup>68</sup> Just as Micah speaks of "doing justice," so in many passages the idiom is "doing hesed." Here Micah admonishes his readers to "love hesed." The passage might be translated, "do justice and love virtue." Virtue includes both one's relationship to God and one's relationship to one's fellow man. It is clear from the previous chapter that hesed does in fact include the horizontal dimension. But the point in the Micah passage is that an attitude is required. One is required to love the notion of hesed. Hesed includes the notion of commitment (loyalty). Micah is saying that Yahweh requires not only commitment, but commitment to the idea of commitment!

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<sup>67</sup>L'Hour, p. 28.

<sup>68</sup>For a discussion of the nuances of hesed see Jaubert, pp. 58-60.

Hosea complains,

What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?  
 What shall I do with you, O Judah?  
 Your hesed is like a morning cloud,  
 like the dew that goes early away.<sup>69</sup>

Yahweh wants a commitment which is more lasting than the dew or the morning fog which is dispelled by the warmth of the rising sun. But true hesed is not like this; it implies a lasting commitment. It is in the light of this passage that the statement of Deutero-Isaiah may be understood:

All flesh is grass  
 and its hesed like the flower  
 of the field.<sup>70</sup>

And in contrast to this weak commitment of man, Yahweh's word will stand forever.

Typical of Hosea is the pairing of hesed with the "knowledge of God." In the continuation of the passage cited above, Hosea writes,

For I desire hesed and not sacrifice,  
 the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.<sup>71</sup>

Here the knowledge of Yahweh is the knowledge of hesed. And it is clear that Hosea understands hesed not only as Yahweh's relationship to Israel, but also as man's relationship to his fellow man. It is not only something Yahweh does; it is what Yahweh requires man to do. Hesed is a virtue.

<sup>69</sup>Hosea 6:4.

<sup>70</sup>Isaiah 40:6.

<sup>71</sup>Hosea 6:6.

In the rib<sup>72</sup> of Hosea 4:1 ff. he writes,

Hear the word of Yahweh, O children of Israel,  
For Yahweh has a contention (rib) with those who dwell  
in the land.

For there is no faithfulness, no hesed, no knowledge  
of God in the land.

And it is for this lack of knowledge of God that the nation  
is destroyed.

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.  
Because you have rejected knowledge, I will reject  
you from being a priest to me.<sup>73</sup>

And is Isaiah,

Therefore my people go into exile for want of knowledge,  
their honored men are dying of hunger,  
and their multitude is parched with thirst.<sup>74</sup>

The lack of knowledge is the cause of the destruction of the  
people, but hesed is salvation.

Sow for yourselves righteousness,  
reap the fruit of hesed,  
break up your fallow ground,  
For it is time to seek Yahweh,  
that he may come and rain salvation  
upon you.<sup>75</sup>

It is appropriate that J.M.P. Smith translates hesed here  
as "piety."<sup>76</sup> For this surely is the thrust of the passage.

<sup>72</sup>Literally "contention." It has been established  
that rib is a legal term. The simile of the rib is that  
Yahweh brings his case to court. Viz. Micah 6:1 ff, Isaiah  
3:13, 50:8, etc.

<sup>73</sup>Hosea 4:6.                      <sup>74</sup>Isaiah 5:13.

<sup>75</sup>Hosea 10:12.

<sup>76</sup>Bible. The Complete Bible, an American Transla-  
tion (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1951).

Hosea continues,

You have plowed iniquity,  
you have reaped injustice,  
you have eaten the fruit of lies.<sup>77</sup>

This makes clear that it is Israel's ethical behaviour which is under scrutiny. Hesed is paralleled with righteousness and antithetic to injustice. Salvation is contingent upon the return to virtue.

In other texts the idea of hesed as virtue is even more explicit. When Ben-hadad was defeated by Ahab at Aphek and feared for his life, he was told by his servants that the king of Israel might actually spare his life because the kings of Israel were reputed to be malki-hesed, "kings of hesed."<sup>78</sup> The unnamed prophet in the story did not view Ahab's sparing of Ben-hadad as virtue; he viewed it as utter foolishness. But Ben-hadad understood Ahab's ethic in terms of hesed.

This use of hesed in the construct relationship with persons appears also in Isaiah.

The righteous man perishes,  
and no one takes it to heart;  
Men of hesed ('anshe-hesed) are taken away  
while no one understands.<sup>79</sup>

The Deuteronomist would scarcely consider Ahab a man of hesed, but two kings of Judah are singled out by the Chronicler to note their hesed: Hezekiah and Josiah.

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<sup>77</sup>Hosea 10:13.

<sup>78</sup>I Kings 20:31.

<sup>79</sup>Isaiah 57:1.

Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah, and hasadaiv, behold, they are written in the vision of Isaiah, the son of Amoz, the prophet, in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.<sup>80</sup>

The Revised Standard Version renders hasadaiv as "his good deeds." The term is plural, and we may understand it as "his acts of righteousness, faithfulness, mercy, and loyalty." Later Judaism would surely understand it as "acts of piety." An almost identical statement is made about King Josiah in II Chronicles 35:26. It is understandable that heseds would be attributed to these kings. The first was a strict Yahwist and close associate of Isaiah the prophet; the second was the great religious reformer in the time of Jeremiah. The contrast of these kings with Ahaz, who capitulated to Assyrian pressures even in matters of religion, and with Manasseh, who persecuted the prophets and was reputed to have executed Isaiah, was striking.

Those who do hesed are Yahweh's hasidim. So in II Samuel 2:9, the song of Hannah:

He shall guard the feet of his hasidim,  
But the wicked shall be cut off in darkness;  
For not by might shall a man prevail.

A man shall prevail by doing hesed, by being a hasidim.

The book of Proverbs understands hesed almost entirely as virtue. In one instance hesed is used in the rare sense of "reproach."

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<sup>80</sup>II Chronicles 32:32. Compare also Nehemiah 13:14.

Righteousness exalts a nation,  
But sin is a hesed to any people.<sup>81</sup>

In all other passages in Proverbs, hesed is a virtue. There is no passage in this book in which hesed is an attribute to God. Typical is Proverbs 3:3-4.

Let not hesed and faithfulness forsake you;  
bind them about your neck,  
write them on the tablet of your heart,  
So you will find favor and good discretion  
in the sight of God and man.

In four passages hesed is paired with 'emeth.<sup>82</sup> In 20:6 the skeptical question is posed:

Many a man proclaims his own hesed,  
but a man of 'emunim (faithfulness) who can find?

'Emunim is plural: "faithfulnesses" or "faithful deeds."

It might have been expected that hesed would be plural here, as in II Chronicles 32:32, 35:25.

The text of 19:22 as it stands does not quite make sense.

The desire of a man is his hesed,  
but better is a poor man than a liar.

Here hesed is set against kazab, a lie. We have already noted how hesed is contrasted to sheger, a synonym for kazab. But R.B.Y. Scott<sup>83</sup> may be correct in suggesting that we

<sup>81</sup>Proverbs 14:34. Compare Leviticus 20:17. "If a man takes his sister....and sees her nakedness, and she sees his nakedness, it is hesed." (LXX oneidos, "a shameful thing.")

<sup>82</sup>Proverbs 3:3, 14:22, 16:6, and 20:28.

<sup>83</sup>R.B.Y. Scott, Proverbs, (Garden City: Doubleday, 1965), p. 116.

should read hosno "his gain," for the Massoretic hasdo, "his hesed," in which case the passage is not relevant to the present discussion. The remaining hesed passages in Proverbs clearly understand hesed as virtue that is to be expected from the pious.

The man of hesed benefits his own soul,  
but the cruel man troubles his own flesh. (11:17)

He who pursues righteousness and hesed  
will find life and righteousness and honor. (21:21)

The description of the "good wife" of chapter 31 concludes with

Opens her mouth with wisdom,  
and the teaching of hesed is on her tongue. (31:26)

Hesed as an ideal ethic for man is often understood in the sense of loyalty, and especially loyalty to God.

Thus Jonah 2:8:

Those who pay regard to vain idols  
forsake their hesed.

But hesed is understood in a much broader sense by the Old Testament writers, and encompasses everything that is virtuous from "loyalty" and "faithfulness" to "good deeds" and quality of compassion and humaneness which caused the servants of Ben-hadad to hope for their lives in the fact that the kings of Israel were indeed "kings of hesed."

#### HESED AS BENEDICTION

It is apparent from a few passages in the Old Testament that hesed became a part of a standard benediction formula. Just as English speaking people often say "Goodbye"



(God be with ye), so Hebrew people often wished the hesed of Yahweh to go with their departing friends. Naomi speaks such words to Ruth and Orpah.

And Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Go, return, each of you to the house of her mother, and may Yahweh do hesed with you as you have done with the dead and with me."<sup>84</sup>

The line between benediction and blessing is sometimes not clear. David expressed his appreciation to the men of Jabesh-gilead who had buried Saul.

"May you be blessed by Yahweh because you did this hesed with your lord, with Saul, and buried him. And now may Yahweh do with you hesed and faithfulness."<sup>85</sup>

That the formula, "And may Yahweh do with you hesed and 'emeth," becomes so stereotyped as to become apocopated is indicated in the conversation with David and Ittai the Gittite. David did not want Ittai with him in his skirmishes with Absalom. He apparently did not trust the foreigner, but tried to send him off with the usual blessing somewhat condensed: "'Immak hesed we'emeth," or "Hesed and faithfulness with you."<sup>86</sup> Here the usual benediction formula has become so standard that its original meaning is somewhat lost. The name of Yahweh is not even invoked, although Ittai answered David with an oath by the life of Yahweh. The RSV is no doubt quite correct in emmeding the text to read, "And may the Lord show steadfast love and faithfulness

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<sup>84</sup>Ruth 1:8.

<sup>85</sup>II Samuel 2:5-6.

<sup>86</sup>II Samuel 15:20.

to you," as an indication of the original intent of the blessing. But in the context it is probably too much. David was giving Ittai a perfunctory goodbye.

Unfortunately, there are no other texts for comparison to substantiate the matter of the shortened hesed benediction, but it is not difficult to imagine that such a phrase as David's words to Ittai was common parlance in taking leave.

## Chapter IV

HESED IN THE PSALMS

Of the nearly one hundred occurrences of the word hesed in the Psalms, only three are used of man. Two of these occurrences are in Psalm 109:

Let there be none to extend hesed to him  
nor any to pity his fatherless children! (vs. 12)

For he did not remember to do hesed,  
but pursued the poor and needy and  
the brokenhearted to their death. (vs. 16)

Hesed as human virtue has been discussed above and needs no elaboration here. The third occurrence is in Psalm 141:5. If Dahood is correct this passage, usually thought to refer to man, actually refers to God!

May the Righteous One strike me,  
the Hasid rebuke me.<sup>1</sup>

Aside from these examples, hesed in the Psalms is the attribute par excellence of God. As in numerous other passages in the Old Testament already cited, it is the single word which sums up in all its richness and complexity Yahweh's relationship to Israel. Whatever the reasons for the original composition of the Psalms, they became the

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<sup>1</sup>Following Dahood and repointing hesed to read hasid, "the Kind One," or "the One who does hesed." On the basis of the Ugaritic usage, Dahood understands this to refer to God. See Mitchell Dahood, Psalms (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), III, 311.

particular cultic expression of the second temple.<sup>2</sup> As such they bring together the many facets of the traditions of ancient Israel, but they present this tradition from a particular point of view. In the celebration of Israel's faith, the psalms betray a common understanding that Yahweh is Israel's particular God, that he has elected Israel to be his people, and that he made a covenant with them.<sup>3</sup> In a real sense, the Psalms are a celebration of this covenant. That hesed is an important word in the Psalmist's vocabulary is not surprising, as it would be very difficult to describe the covenant relationship without this special covenant word. Indeed the congregation is sometimes described as the hasidim, "the doers of hesed" or "the covenant-minded ones." In the preparation for the rib (trial) of Psalm 50, God says,

Gather to me my hasidim  
who made a covenant with me by sacrifice!<sup>4</sup>

These who made a covenant with Yahweh are none other than the members of the congregation of Israel. It is to these that Yahweh shows his hesed, and it is these who do hesed. Although hesed in the Psalms is used almost exclusively as an attribute of Yahweh, Yahweh expects that Israel will

<sup>2</sup>Sigmund Mowinckel, The Psalms in Israel's Worship (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1962), I, 2.

<sup>3</sup>Mowinckel, I, 122.

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 50:5.

abide by the precepts of hesed. Psalm 18 describes the way in which a man receives from Yahweh according to the nature of his own actions:

With the hasid thou dost show thyself hasid; with the blameless man, thou dost show thyself blameless; With the pure thou dost show thyself pure; and with the crooked thou dost show thyself perverse.<sup>5</sup>

The point is obviously that with the doers of hesed, the congregation of Israel, Yahweh will continue to do hesed. Yahweh has done hesed with the fathers, and the Psalmist can claim this relationship through his participation in the continuing cult. Psalm 78, although not using the word hesed, makes the point clear in the recounting of the "glorious deeds of Yahweh" throughout the history of Israel. The sins of the fathers are used as a counterpoint to the redeeming acts of Yahweh. But the message is that throughout all of history, in spite of all that Israel did, Yahweh continued his covenant relationship with his people, finally choosing David "to be shepherd of Jacob, his people---of Israel, his inheritance."

#### HESED AS SALVATION

The proclamation to Moses, "Yahweh, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in hesed,"<sup>6</sup> is

<sup>5</sup>Psalm 18:25-26. It is difficult to reproduce the Hebrew style in which a substantive is coupled with a verb of the same root in the hithpael or causative tense. The first line is 'im hasid tithassad.'

<sup>6</sup>Exodus 34:5.

one of the cornerstones of understanding in the Psalms. That Yahweh abounds in hesed is both the means of salvation and in a peculiar way the reason for salvation. When Yahweh saw that the children of Israel had made the golden calf, he resolved to destroy them. But Moses made intercession by reminding Yahweh that the Egyptians would hear of this and believe that Yahweh was not a God of hesed but one who "with evil intent did bring them forth, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face of the earth."<sup>7</sup> When the Children of Israel plotted to abandon the march to the Promised Land to return to Egypt, Yahweh expressed his intent to destroy them. Moses again made intercession, repeating the proclamation of the hesed of Yahweh and protesting that Yahweh's credibility among the nations, especially in Egypt, would be in jeopardy.<sup>8</sup> This incident and Moses' prayer of intercession has been discussed above,<sup>9</sup> but it is worth noting once more that Moses' plea was that Yahweh would pardon the sins of the people "according to the greatness of thy hesed." For the Psalmist this is a central point. It is for the sake of his own hesed that Yahweh grants salvation.

Turn, O Yahweh, save my life,  
 deliver me for the sake of thy hesed.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Exodus 32:12.

<sup>8</sup>Numbers 14:11-19.

<sup>9</sup>Page 33.

<sup>10</sup>Psalm 6:4.

Because Israel trusts in Yahweh, Yahweh's vindication is in the salvation of Israel. This theme represents a thread of anxiety which runs through the entire Old Testament account. Israel is Yahweh's elect, yet calamity has too frequently overtaken the nation. How can the hesed of Yahweh be vindicated? The answer of the prophets was that his hesed included his moral rectitude, zedaqah, which demanded that Yahweh not only respond to Israel's faithfulness with blessing, but that he respond to Israel's apostasy with appropriate punishments. The admonition in Deuteronomy 30:10-20 is succinct:

I call heaven and earth to witness against you this day, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and curse; therefore choose life, that you and your descendants may live, loving Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, and cleaving to him.

The blessing is to be had by the keeping of covenant; the curse will follow the breaking of the covenant agreement. But the experience of Israel raises the question of the theodicy: Is the justice of Yahweh truly vindicated? Is the punishment merited? The prophets point to the sins of the people as the justification for Yahweh's anger, but the psalmist pleads,

All this has come upon us  
though we have not forgotten thee,  
or been false to thy covenant.  
Our heart has not turned back,  
nor have our steps departed from thy way,  
that thou shouldst have broken us in the place of  
jackals, and covered us with deep darkness.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup>Psalm 44:17-19.

Rise up, come to our help!  
 deliver us for the sake of thy hesed.<sup>12</sup>

Yahweh is urged to remember his hesed that Israel may be saved.

### HESED AND ZEDAQAH

The psalmist's understanding of salvation is contingent upon his understanding of several key words which we have already noted briefly. One of the most important of these is zedaqah. Its connection with hesed is implied in Psalm 33:4.

For the word of Yahweh is upright (yashar);  
 and all his deeds are in faithfulness ('emunah).  
 He loves righteousness (zedaqah) and justice (mishpat);  
 The hesed of Yahweh fills the earth.

Here the parallel structure of the psalm indicates that zedaqah and mishpat are somehow summarized in hesed. Zedaqah was understood by the prophets as a moral rectitude inherent in the nature of Yahweh. It is this moral behaviour characterized by mishpat and zedaqah that Yahweh requires from his faithful. The cultic observances separated from ethical practice simply will not do. Amos writes:

I hate, I despise your feasts,  
 and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies.  
 Take away from me the noise of your songs;  
 to the melody of your harps I will not listen.  
 But let mishpat roll down like waters,  
 and zedaqah like an ever-flowing stream.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>Psalm 44:26.

<sup>13</sup>Amos 5:21, 23.



Mowinckel notes that the prophets of doom rarely speak of Yahweh's zedaqah. They speak rather of the moral uprightness which Yahweh demands from man. Because of his inherent zedaqah, Yahweh is true to his own ethical nature in punishing the sins of the people.<sup>14</sup> But the psalmist's view of zedaqah is slightly different from that of the prophets. The psalmist understands zedaqah as Yahweh's fulfilling his covenant promise to obtain the "right" conditions for the prosperity (shalom) of his people. Thus in the psalms, zedaqah is not condemnation, but salvation. If Israel strays from the covenant relationship, Yahweh will lead her back in the "zedek-paths."<sup>15</sup> The RSV footnote, "right paths," is to the point: Yahweh will lead in the paths which are not only "righteous," i.e. "moral," but in the "right" paths which result in Israel's having "goodness and hesed."<sup>16</sup>

#### HESED AND 'EMETH

The word most often associated with hesed is 'emeth or sometimes, as in Psalm 33:4, 'emunah. The root is 'aman, "to prop, stay, or support," and metaphorically "to be faithful, trustworthy, sure." The derivative 'emunah means "faithfulness." Gesenius notes that it is faithfulness in

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<sup>14</sup>Mowinckel, I, 103.

<sup>15</sup>Psalm 23:3.

<sup>16</sup>Psalm 23:6.

fulfilling promises, applied to either man or God.<sup>17</sup> The form more commonly associated with hesed is 'emeth, which carries not only the notion of "faithfulness," but also of "truth." The force of 'emeth seems to be an integrity of mind. Hence, like hesed, it stands opposed to sheqer. In the passage quoted from Psalm 33, 'emunah is paralleled with yashar, "upright." The word means "physically upright," and by extension, "moral." Hesed is understood to be a quality of relationship which embraces all of these concepts. In the context of a royal psalm, Psalm 89:14 brings these ideas together:

Zedeq and mishpat are the foundation of thy throne;  
Hesed and 'emeth go before thy face.

In numerous psalms hesed and 'emeth or 'emunah are paralleled or coupled.

Thy hesed is before my eyes,  
and I walk continually in thy 'emeth.<sup>18</sup>

For thy hesed is higher than the heavens,  
and thy 'emeth is to the clouds.<sup>19</sup>

For great is his hesed toward us,  
and the 'emeth of Yahweh endures forever.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup>Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, Genesius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1954), p. 58.

<sup>18</sup>Psalm 26:3. The verb "to walk" is in the hithpael which is often construed as iterative.

<sup>19</sup>Psalm 108:4. Comp. Psalm 36:5. The word in the latter passage is 'emunah.

<sup>20</sup>Psalm 117:2.

I bow down toward thy holy temple  
and give thanks to thy name  
for thy hesed and thy 'emeth.<sup>21</sup>

I have not concealed thy hesed and thy 'emeth  
from the great congregation.  
Thou, O Lord, do not withhold thy mercy from me,  
let thy hesed and thy 'emeth ever preserve me.<sup>22</sup>

The salvation which is to be obtained through the cult rests upon the continuation of the covenant relationship (hesed) with Yahweh and the absolute dependability of his word. His hesed is grounded in truth and faithfulness ('emeth) and in that which is absolutely secure ('emunah). Speaking of his covenant to David, Yahweh says,

But I will not remove from him my hesed,  
or be false to my 'emunah.  
I will not violate my covenant  
or alter the word that went forth from my lips.<sup>23</sup>

The psalmist is confident that Yahweh's zedaqah is for the salvation of Israel; he will not lead in the ways of destruction, nor will he fail to secure for Israel all that is good. It is contingent upon Israel to keep the covenant and know that Yahweh will keep hesed.

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<sup>21</sup>Psalm 138:2.

<sup>22</sup>Psalm 40:10b-11.

<sup>23</sup>Psalm 89:33-34.

All the paths of Yahweh are hesed and 'emeth  
for those who keep his covenant and his testimonies.<sup>24</sup>

Thus the psalmist can hold to the hope of salvation. It is through the hesed of Yahweh that he can enter into the temple to participate in the cult.<sup>25</sup> Even though difficult times have befallen Israel, and her enemies scoff in derision, the member of the congregation finds a basis for trust and confidence.

But I have trusted in thy hesed;  
my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.<sup>26</sup>

#### THE IDEA OF SALVATION IN THE PSALMS

The idea of salvation itself is rather complex in the thinking of Israel. It is apparent from the psalms that it is first of all a literal salvation. It is deliverance from one's enemies and from the overwhelming realities of life which threaten to destroy one's physical being.

O Yahweh, my God, in thee do I take refuge;  
save me from all my pursuers, and deliver me,  
lest like a lion they rend me,  
dragging me away, with none to rescue.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup>Psalm 25:10. For other psalms in which hesed and 'emeth or 'emunah are associated, see 69:13-14, 85:10, 88:11, 89:1, 24, 29; 100:5. Also the passage 11QPs<sup>a</sup> 26:10 (the Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11) is similar to Psalm 89:14.

Hesed and 'emeth surround his presence (his face);  
'emeth and mishpat and zedeq are the foundation  
of his throne.

See J.A. Sanders, The Psalms Scroll of Qumran Cave 11  
(Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1965), p. 89.

<sup>25</sup>Psalm 5:7.      <sup>26</sup>Psalm 13:5.      <sup>27</sup>Psalm 7:1-2.

Keep me as the apple of the eye;  
 hide me in the shadow of thy wings,  
 from the wicked who despoil me,  
 my deadly enemies who surround me.<sup>28</sup>

It should be noted at this point that although there may be some "personal" psalms included in the psalter, the view of the individual and his relationship to the community in ancient Israel was somewhat different from the usual understanding of modern man. Mowinckel and others have understood the basic reality in human life for the Israelite to be in the community, not in the individual existence.<sup>29</sup> Outside the tribal or cultic relationship the individual was nothing. This is precisely Cain's punishment, and he declares that it is more than he can bear.<sup>30</sup> He protests that he will be driven away from the ground, from his sense of "rootedness," from Yahweh's face, i.e. cultic participation, and from any chance of salvation: "And whoever finds me will slay me." The peculiar twist of the story in which Cain is driven away from the face of Yahweh, yet has Yahweh's mark of protection need not concern us here. What is of concern is the Israelite sense of identity in the community. The "I" of the psalms is never quite just "I"; it is the "I" of the community of Yahweh's people. Even when the "I" is the royal "I," the "I" of the king, it is the king as the repre-

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<sup>28</sup>Psalms 17:8-9.

<sup>29</sup>Mowinckel, I, 42.

<sup>30</sup>Genesis 4:13.

sentative of the community. Thus such lines as

I am not afraid of ten thousands of people  
who have set themselves against me round about.<sup>31</sup>

can be understood in the sense of the corporate community expressing its anxieties and hopes in the context of the cultic experience.

Secondly, the cultic experience of salvation is the renewal of historical salvation. The history of Israel is mythological history. That is to say that the deliverance from Egypt and the making of a covenant at Sinai are more than historical events in the tradition of the cult. These events are the symbols of Yahweh's salvation. As he delivered from Egypt, parted the Red Sea, and gave the torah at Sinai, so he will deliver from foes, conquer the forces of chaos, and make a covenant with those who participate in the cult and experience the myth anew. Hence several psalms are concerned with "sacred history." Psalm 78 seems to betray a rather didactic style in which the goodness of Yahweh is contrasted with the sinfulness of the nation, turning it into a kind of theodicy which justifies the sufferings of Israel. But even this psalm can be understood as a prayer of confession which culminates in an affirmation of the Jerusalem temple and the Davidic kingship. In the cult it would surely be followed by a prayer for salvation. Psalm 106 uses the same history in a psalm of thanksgiving. Here

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<sup>31</sup>Psalm 3:6.

the saving acts of Yahweh are recounted, the rebelliousness of Israel is noted, and the nature of Yahweh's hesed is recalled.

Nevertheless he regarded their distress  
when he heard their cry.  
He remembered for their sake his covenant,  
and relented according to the abundance of his hesed.

Upon this recollection of the traditional history of the Judges, the congregation is participating in that history, and can cry

Save us, O Yahweh, our God,  
and gather us from among the nations,  
that we may give thanks to thy holy name  
and glory in thy praise.

The historical salvation becomes the actual salvation of Israel in her ongoing experience.

The third aspect of salvation in the cult of Israel is that it was in the repetition of the victory over chaos and the periodic re-creation of the world. The lament of Psalm 77 includes a recollection of the "deeds of Yahweh," and the "wonders of old." That recollection must have originally read

Thou didst with thy arm redeem thy people,  
the sons of Jacob and Joseph.  
Thou didst lead thy people like a flock  
by the hand of Moses and Aaron.<sup>32</sup>

But in the present text of the psalm a poem of different form and content has been inserted between the two bicola. Verses 16-19 are in the form of tricola and are about the

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<sup>32</sup>Psalm 77:15, 20.

conquest of the waters of chaos. It is not our purpose here to be concerned with the forms of Hebrew poetry, but it is of interest that the psalmist here thought it appropriate to insert a short psalm within a psalm. The lament of the psalm turns to a question:

Will Yahweh spurn forever,  
and never again be favorable?  
Has his hesed forever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?

The cultic answer to such a question would be to call to mind the deeds of Yahweh which indicate that his hesed has been established for all time. The cult can participate in the mythological history and attain salvation. The psalmist does indeed appeal to the cultic history.

I will call to mind the deeds of Yahweh,  
yea, I will remember thy wonders of old.

But it is not only in the mythological history of the cult that there is salvation, but also in the act of creation: the victory over the forces of watery chaos. The psalmist suddenly moves from the redemption of the sons of Jacob and Joseph to the *primaeval* struggle with the watery deep.

When the waters saw thee, O God,  
When the waters saw thee, they trembled,  
even the depths shook.  
The clouds poured out water,  
the skies gave forth thunder,  
even your arrows went back and forth.  
The peal of thy thunder was in the whirlwind;  
lightnings lighted up the world;  
the earth shook and trembled.  
Thy way was in the sea,  
and thy path in the great waters,  
but thy footprints were not known.

In the act of worship the congregation participates in the



victory of Yahweh over the demonic forces of chaos, and that victory becomes for the congregation a victory of order and stability over whatever chaotic forces of destruction are threatening. The scope of this victory should be understood as quite broad. It ranges from the victory of the order of nature (the periodicity of the seasons, of rain, of fertility, etc.) to the spiritual victory of the worshipper who finds in Yahweh and in the cult a sense of unity for his otherwise chaotic and fragmented life.

The insertion of the older psalm within the later one is an indication of what is evident from other liturgies: that the historical mythos is not clearly separated from the order-chaos-creation mythology. The themes of creation and the conquest of chaos are understood to be repeated in the experience of the cult. The redemption of the people must include the victory over the chaotic forces of nature. Some of the phrases used to describe this conquest are seen as aptly describing events in the history of the cult. Hence in the enthronement Psalm 68, which evidently describes a rather elaborate processional culminating in the enthronement of Yahweh in the sanctuary, lines from the older section of Psalm 77 are paraphrased and related to the theophany at Sinai.

Psalm 68:8a

The earth quaked  
the heavens poured down rain,  
at the presence of God.

Psalm 77

Yea, the deep trembled  
(16c)  
the clouds poured out  
water (17a)  
When the waters saw thee,  
O God, (16a)

But the context of the passage in Psalm 68 is that of historical salvation.

O God, when thou didst go forth before thy people,  
 when thou didst march through the wilderness,  
 the earth quaked, the heavens poured down rain,  
 at the presence of God;  
 yon Sinai quaked at the presence of God,  
 the God of Israel.

Even the assurance of the seasonal rains is set in an historical context.

Rain in abundance, O God, thou didst shed abroad,  
 thou didst restore thy heritage as it languished;  
 thy flock found a dwelling in it;  
 in thy goodness, O God, thou didst provide for the  
 needy.<sup>33</sup>

This psalm has been something of an enigma to interpreters because it seems to be a collection of various songs and fragments from various sources and periods. But the theme and the occasion were identified by Hans Schmidt as being identified by verses 24-25.<sup>34</sup>

The solemn processions are seen, O God,  
 the processions of my God, my King, into the sanctuary--  
 the singers in front, the musicians behind them,  
 between them the maidens playing tambourines.

The kingship of Yahweh is being celebrated, and the processional is to the temple where he will be enthroned. The songs and hymns celebrate the nature of Yahweh's rule over the earth. The psalm opens with the words of Moses used

<sup>33</sup>Psalm 68:7-8.

<sup>34</sup>Hans Schmidt, Die Psalmen (Tübingen: Mohr, 1934) in Wm. R. Taylor and Steward McCullough, "The Book of Psalms," in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), IV, 353.

when the ark set out.

Let God arise, let his enemies be scattered;  
let those who hate him flee before him!<sup>35</sup>

Then the fate of the wicked is contrasted with the lot of the righteous:

Let the wicked perish before God!  
But let the righteous be joyful.

With the enthronement of Yahweh, mishpat will be the rule as justice will be done to the poor and the helpless.

Father of the fatherless and protector of widows  
is God in his holy habitation.

Once more Yahweh is leading his people, as he did through the wilderness when the earth quaked at Sinai as it did at creation. His ordering of nature will insure the rains and prosperity for the land. A victory song celebrates the conquests of Yahweh's host as women divide the spoil. Zion is praised as the dwelling place of Yahweh, chosen over more lofty mountains. God is praised as the God of salvation through whom one may escape death. In what is probably a post-exilic diatribe against foreign domination,

Trample under foot those who lust after tribute;  
scatter the peoples who delight in war.

The psalm ends in a song of praise to God in his sanctuary.

Terrible is God in his sanctuary,  
the God of Israel,  
he gives power and strength to the people.

Such psalms, whether concerned with nature or with

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<sup>35</sup>Numbers 10:35.

ethics, are concerned with what happens when Yahweh's hesed is established in the earth. A primary consideration in that establishment is the zedaqah, the right order, both in nature and in human ethical behaviour. Psalm 93 celebrates the establishment of the world in Yahweh's order.

Yea, the world is established; it shall never be moved;  
thy throne is established from old;  
thou art from everlasting.

The establishment of the order of the world is the assurance that Yahweh's throne, i.e. the Jerusalem cult, the Davidic monarchy, is also established. But it is difficult not to believe that the Jerusalem cult and the Davidic monarchy were in the eyes of the faithful sure signs of the establishment of the order of the world. Almost inevitably in such a psalm the theme of the forces of chaos, the waters, must enter in.

The rivers have lifted up, O Yahweh,  
the rivers have lifted up their voice,  
the rivers lift up their roaring.  
Mightier than the thunders of many waters,  
mightier than the waves of the sea,  
Yahweh is mighty!

Yahweh is mightier than the floods of the chaos, and amid the demonic, destructive manifestations of nature, he insures order.

Thy decrees are very sure;  
holiness befits thy house,  
O Yahweh, for evermore.

When the hesed of Yahweh is established, the promises of his covenant will be realized. Prosperity, shalom, will come to the earth. So in Psalm 85:

Show us thy hesed, O Yahweh  
and grant us thy salvation.

Let me hear what the God Yahweh will speak,  
for he will speak shalom to his people,  
to his hasidim, to those who turn to him. Selah.<sup>36</sup>

Shalom is the blessing which the cult obtains through its worship. It is Yahweh's life-giving power expressed in the fertility of the earth and the flocks, the physical and spiritual well-being of the congregation, safety from enemies, and general prosperity. These are the conditions which prevail when hesed is established. Hence hesed and salvation are identical.

#### THE HESED REFRAIN IN THE PSALMS

Hesed is not only the blessing sought by the cult, but it is a fact inherent in the nature of Yahweh. It is not only petitioned in congregational prayers, but it is a cause for thanksgiving because it already is. In several of the latter Psalms hesed and todah (praise, thanksgiving) are linked in a refrain which appears in about a dozen places. Psalm 106:1 is typical.

Give thanks to Yahweh, for he is good;  
for his hesed endures forever!

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<sup>36</sup>Psalm 85:7-8. The Hebrew of the last line is obscure and probably cannot stand as in the MT. Several suggestions have been put forth. See Bible, Biblica Hebraica (Stuttgart: Wurttembergische Bibelanstalt, 1952), and Dahood, Psalms. LXX reads "For he will speak peace to his people and to his saints (hosious) and to those who turn their hearts toward him."

This bicola introduces Psalm 107 and 118 and is the last bicola of the latter. The psalmist seems to understand todah as a proper response to hesed. In Psalm 50, the hasidim made a covenant with Yahweh by sacrifice, but it is not the sacrifice of burnt offerings or bulls which Yahweh requires; it is the sacrifice of todah.

Offer to God a sacrifice of todah,  
and pay your vows to the most high;  
and call upon me in the day of trouble;  
I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.

He who brings todah as his sacrifice honors me;  
to him who orders his way aright  
I will show the salvation of God.<sup>37</sup>

The thanksgiving offering (zebah todah) is prescribed in Leviticus,<sup>38</sup> but the emphasis seems to have shifted in the psalms from a ceremonial requirement to an attitude of todah on the part of the worshipper. The word means both "thanksgiving" and "confession." Psalm 51:17 states that "the sacrifice acceptable to God is a broken spirit and a contrite heart." Todah then seems not to be the result of a sacrifice, but is the proper sacrifice itself.<sup>39</sup> The occasion for the sacrifice of thanksgiving is the hesed of Yahweh which "endures forever." Psalm 136 opens with this bicola,

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<sup>37</sup>Psalm 50:14-15, 23.

<sup>38</sup>Leviticus 7:13, 15; 22:29, etc.

<sup>39</sup>A.E. Goodman, "Hesed and Todah in the Linguistic Tradition of Psalter," in Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindus (eds.) Words and Meanings (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 108.

paraphrases it, and uses the last colon as a refrain (i.e. the second colon of every couplet) for the entire psalm.

O give thanks to Yahweh for he is good.  
 for his hesed endures forever.  
 O give thanks to the God of gods,  
 for his hesed endures forever.  
 O give thanks to the Lord of lords,  
 for his hesed endures forever.

There follows a recitation of the history of the cult with the response to each item being "for his hesed endures forever," which completes the bicola. The history includes creation, deliverance from Egypt, survival in the wilderness, victory in Canaan, and the subsequent care and concern of Yahweh in Israel's ensuing struggles. The psalm concludes with

O give thanks to the God of heaven,  
 for his hesed endures forever.

That the refrain became a stereotype is indicated by the fact that the Chronicler includes it in the liturgy for the dedication of the temple of Solomon, although it does not appear in the account in I Kings.<sup>40</sup> The rhythm of the chant, ki l'olam hasdo, (his hesed endures forever!) makes it tempting to see in the phrase a sort of "festal shout" or very common congregation response, almost as an "amen." For in the establishment of Yahweh's hesed for all time is the salvation of Israel secured.

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<sup>40</sup> II Chronicles 5:13.

## Chapter V

# HESED IN THE SEPTUAGINT AND ITS INFLUENCE ON LATER JUDAEO-CHRISTIAN TRADITION

## THE SEPTUAGINT

The word commonly used in the Septuagint to translate hesed is eleos, "mercy." Dikaiosune, "justice, righteousness," appears much less frequently. Elpis, "hope," appears in II Chronicles 35:26, but may be a mistake for eleos which appears in the parallel passage in II Chronicles 32:32.

The Septuagint understanding of the force of hesed may be seen initially by a consideration of the "proclamation passage," Exodus 34:6-7. Here the Hebrew and the Greek versions are arranged side by side for comparison.

Hebrew	Greek
Yahweh, the God	The Lord, the God
merciful ( <u>rahum</u> )	compassionate ( <u>oiktirmon</u> )
and gracious ( <u>hannun</u> )	and merciful ( <u>eleemon</u> ),
slow to anger ( <u>'ewek 'aphaim</u> )	longsuffering ( <u>makrothumos</u> )
and abounding in <u>hesed</u>	and abounding in mercy
( <u>rab-hesed</u> )	( <u>polueleos</u> )
and faithfulness ( <u>'emeth</u> ),	and truthful ( <u>alethinos</u> ),
keeping <u>hesed</u>	and guarding righteousness
	( <u>dikaiosune</u> )
	and mercy ( <u>eleos</u> )
for thousands...	for thousands...

Hesed here is eleos, and polueleos is quite appropriate for rab-hesed. There is no Hebrew attestation for the Greek addition, dikaiousune, in the seventh line. This line must surely have represented the Hebrew noser zedagah wehesed.



Either the translator had such a text, or he decided that eleos alone could not convey the force of hesed in the context of the passage. Dikaiosune is in fact used in a number of Old Testament texts to convey hesed. But before considering those texts, two things should be underscored about dikaiosune: (1) it is the word used regularly to translate zedaqah; and (2) the discussion of zedaqah from the last chapter should be recalled---namely that zedaqah is not primarily moral-ethical language; it is salvation language. One of the major difficulties in understanding Hebrew literature in Greek translation is that Greek speaks easily in the abstract: the moral, the ethical, the categorical, the ideational; Hebrew speak in the concrete, the experiential, the existential redemption language.<sup>1</sup> With this understanding, such passages as Genesis 15:6 take on a clearer meaning.

And he (Abraham) believed Yahweh, and he imputed it to him as righteousness.

The context is that although Yahweh had promised Abram land and descendants, Abram had no heir. When he expressed anxiety about this, Yahweh repeated his promise, and Abram believed him and wayyahshebeah lo zedqah. In salvation language zedqah means that aspect of Yahweh's nature which is to do the "right" thing, to lead in the "right" path so

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<sup>1</sup>Norman H. Snaith, "The Language of the Old Testament," in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), I, 231.

that his faithful may get shalom. The meaning in the present text is that Abraham trusted Yahweh; he believed that Yahweh would do the "right" thing to fulfill his promise. The Greek for this last clause is kai elogisthe auto eis dikaiosune.

There are two passages in the Abraham stories in which hesed is represented by dikaiosune. The first is the account of Abraham and Abimelek at Beer-sheba.<sup>2</sup> Abimelek made the proposition to Abraham:

Now swear to me by God that you will not sheger with me,...but as I have done hesed with you, so you will do with me.

The Septuagint renders the passage

Now swear to me by God that you will not adikesein me, ...but according to the dikaiosune which I have done with you, you will do with me.

Here the LXX understands hesed as a straightforward ethical relationship in which dealings are honest and agreements are kept. The second passage betrays an understanding of hesed somewhat in line with the previous discussion of zedaqah, although here zedaqah is applied to man rather than to God. In the story of Abraham and Sarah at Gerar, Abraham told Abimelek that Sarah was his sister. When Abimelek discovered the ruse, he was alarmed that he might have been deceived into a serious violation of ethics in taking another man's wife. He called Abraham to account, and Abraham

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<sup>2</sup>Genesis 21:22 ff.

confessed:

I said to her, "This is the hesed you must do with me: at every place to which we come, say of me, 'He is my brother.'"<sup>3</sup>

The LXX translates this quite literally, using dikaiosune for hesed. The dikaiosune here means the thing that must be done in order to bring about the desired result, in this case, survival. In more general terms, dikaiosune is what will bring prosperity.

In his prayer of desperation at the prospect of meeting his wronged brother, Jacob prayed,

I am not worthy of all the hesed and all the 'emeth which thou hast done with thy servant.<sup>4</sup>

Again the LXX understands hesed as dikaiosune, the providential leading of Yahweh. In what is evidently a late addition to Exodus 15, hesed/dikaiosune is used in precisely the sense of "right" leading.

Thou hast lead in thy hesed/dikaiosune the people whom thou hast redeemed, thou hast guided them by thy strength to thy holy abode.<sup>5</sup>

In a few passages the Hebrew hasidim is rendered by dikaioi, "the righteous ones." In the so-called prayer of Hannah, the plight of the faithful is contrasted to the doom

<sup>3</sup>Genesis 20:13b.

<sup>4</sup>Genesis 32:10. There is no Hebrew textual support for the LXX: Ikanoustho moi apo pases dikaiousunes... "Let there be for me enough of all the dikaiousunes..."

<sup>5</sup>Exodus 15:13.

of the wicked:

He will guard the feet of his hasidim,  
but the wicked shall be cut off in darkness,  
for not by might shall a man prevail.<sup>6</sup>

The LXX reading for the verse does not follow the MT, but reads

Granting his petition to him who prays,  
and he blesses the years of the dikaïos,  
for by strength man cannot prevail.

Isaiah 57:1 involves a similar rendering, but since the Hebrew is 'anoshe-hesed, "men of hesed," the Greek translates andres dikaioi. The dikaioi are those who do dikaïosune, the "right" which Yahweh has revealed, to which the faithful are bound by his covenant, and which will lead to salvation.

As previously noted, the most common rendering of hesed in the Septuagint is eleos, "mercy." It has shown that mercy is an important aspect of hesed, but the almost exclusive use of eleos to translate this word with such a complex meaning would seem to impoverish the understanding of hesed for the Greek reader. It is true, as Snaith has remarked,<sup>7</sup> that one must understand that the Greek of the Septuagint must not be read as classical Greek; the religious terms of the Septuagint have special meanings which are derived from the Hebrew. We have developed this principle in the discussion of dikaïosune as it relates to zedaqah and is clearly something different than simple "justice"

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<sup>6</sup>I Samuel 2:9.

<sup>7</sup>Snaith, p. 231.

or "righteousness." But it may be demanding too much of eleos to expect that it can convey all of hesed. Abner's retort to Ishbosheth,<sup>8</sup>

I have this day done eleos with the house of Saul, thy father, and with his brothers and friends, and have not gone over to the house of David...

is a strong protestation of consistent demonstrated loyalty. The same force is required in the rebuke of Hushai by Absalom: "Is this your eleos to your friend?"<sup>9</sup> The Davidic covenant statement requires an understanding of eleos not only as devotion and loyalty, but in the entire covenant language context of hesed.<sup>10</sup>

But my eleos I will not take from him as I took it from those whom I removed from my presence.

In the Old Testament there are some two hundred occurrences of eleos or its derivatives standing for hesed. The numerous contexts of hesed and the great complexity of its meaning raises some doubt about the adequacy of eleos to transmit its meaning with any wholeness. It is possible that the Greek translators would have agreed with Caird's pronouncement that hesed is an untranslatable word,<sup>11</sup> but they did in fact have to translate it. The task was to produce a Greek translation of the Old Testament which would convey the

<sup>8</sup>II Samuel 3:8.

<sup>9</sup>II Samuel 16:17.

<sup>10</sup>I Samuel 7:15.

<sup>11</sup>George B. Caird, "The First and Second Books of Samuel," exegesis in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1955), II, 885. Note on I Samuel 2:19.

sense of the Hebrew original for Jews whose native language had become Greek. At the completion of the translation of the Torah, no less a figure than Philo declared his elation at the faithfulness of the translation to the original.<sup>12</sup> Problems developed when the Jews adopted a new Hebrew text which differed significantly from the text used as a basis for the Septuagint. But it seems quite probable that the words used to convey the meanings of the Hebrew text were from the vocabulary which Alexandrian Judaism had adopted to express Jewish ideas in the Greek language. The problems of meaning arose as the Palestinian rabbis lost interest in the Greek text which no longer represented the current Hebrew text, and the Septuagint became the possession of the Christian church. As the only Old Testament which the church knew, it was the Word of God and provided the scriptural basis for the developing doctrines of the church. Understood in Greek terms rather than as a representation of a Hebrew original, its interpretation included some occasional strange twists from the point of view of the Hebraist. The classical example is the translation of the Hebrew 'almah' by the Greek parthenos.<sup>13</sup> The former means "a young woman;" the latter denotes "a virgin." Hence Isaiah 7:14 is quoted in Matthew

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<sup>12</sup>Snaith, p. 231.

<sup>13</sup>It is of interest that Origen's Hexapla, the versions of Aquila, Symmachus, and Theodotion render 'almah' by neanis, "a girl."

1:22 using the Greek word for "virgin" and attesting upon however shaky grounds the church's proof-text for the doctrine of the virgin birth.

But it must not be assumed that all of the problems involved in the Greek translation of the Old Testament are problems with untranslatable Hebrew words. The Hebrew meanings do not remain constant. An important case in point is the Hebrew word hasidim. As stated in the last chapter, this word is used in the Psalms to denote one who has entered into the covenant relationship with Yahweh, i.e. a member of the congregation. But in later Judaism the word assumed a special meaning as the Hasidim emerged as an identifiable group within Judaism. It was this group that probably gave birth to both the Essenes and the Pharisees as Jewish pietist movements.<sup>14</sup> The Hasideans are listed among those who joined the Maccabean revolt to fight for the law,<sup>15</sup> and are the first to seek peace when religious freedom is secured and someone from the line of Aaron is appointed to the High priesthood.<sup>16</sup> In the Hellenistic period the word hasidim came to be understood as "the pious ones," and hasid was understood as "piety." Thus in the Psalms the regular translation of hasidim is not in terms of eleos, but in terms of hosios, "piety." In eleven Psalms passages

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<sup>14</sup>I.G. Matthews, The Religious Pilgrimage of Israel (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1947), pp. 231, 254.

<sup>15</sup>I Maccabees 2:42.

<sup>16</sup>I Maccabees 7:12.

hasidim appears as hosioi.<sup>17</sup> In the quotation of Psalm 132:8-9 which appears in II Chronicles 6:41 at the close of Solomon's prayer of dedication for the temple, LXX merely paraphrases the last line, thus seeming to translate hasideka as huioi sou, "thy sons," whereas the Psalms passage is translated hosioi sou, "thy holy ones." The particular translation here is probably not significant for a discussion of the Greek understanding of hesed; it is evidently an example of the much noted fact that the Septuagint often paraphrases later Old Testament material rather than attempting to translate literally. Some of the Septuagint has been characterized as "little more than a targum."<sup>18</sup> A passage not included in the above, Psalm 18:25, merits special attention. The difficulty of reproducing the Hebrew style in this passage has been noted above.<sup>19</sup> 'Im hasid tithassad, "with the hasid I will be hasid," involves a Hebrew noun coupled with a verb from the same root. This is easily reproduced in Greek, but LXX does not choose to use eleemonos, "the merciful," but hosiou, "the pious" or "the holy." The reasons for this choice are clear from the foregoing discussion. The Greek text here reads, Meta hosiou hosiothese. Since "piety" is hardly ascribable to God, the passage translates "To the holy I will be holy." Although this passage probably was

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<sup>17</sup> Psalms 30:14, 31:23, 37:28, 79:2, 85:8, 97:10, 116:15, 132:9, 16; 145:10, 148:14.

<sup>18</sup> Snaith, p. 231.      <sup>19</sup> Supra, p. 51, note 162.



intended by the Psalmist as something like "To the loyal I will be loyal,"<sup>20</sup> and the Greek use of eleos for hesed would lead one to expect "To the merciful I will be merciful,"<sup>21</sup> the LXX rendering probably does in fact carry the force of hasid as understood in the second century B.C.

The feminine form, *hosia*, appears in the slightly enigmatic passage, Isaiah 55:3b.

And I will make for you an everlasting covenant,  
hasde David hane'emanim.

RSV translates the last line, "my steadfast, sure love for David." But hasde is pointed as a construct plural, not as a plural with the first person singular suffix. Thus, the line must refer to the "faithful heseds of David." This grammatical point was understood by LXX translators who rendered the line ta hosia David ta pista. Hosia means the rites, offerings, or service rendered to a god. Hence the "faithful service" rendered by David is reminiscent of the use of hesed as the "good deeds" of Hezekiah and Josiah.<sup>22</sup> The problem is the relationship of the line to the previous line. The Hebrew poses no special problem, as the lines may be understood as

And I will make with you an everlasting covenant  
of the faithful heseds of David.

The Greek hosia might be understood as dative, although the

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<sup>20</sup>So translates RSV.      <sup>21</sup>So translates KJV.

<sup>22</sup>II Chronicles 32:32, 35:26. Also vid. supra p. 45.

iota subscript is not written in the text.

And I will make with you an everlasting covenant  
for the faithful hosia of David.

The theological notion of a saving relationship with Yahweh through the hesed of the Davidic King is not foreign to the thinking of Judaism.<sup>23</sup> The saving relationship is not only through the king, but is for the sake of the king.<sup>24</sup> "Heseds" in the sense of "good deeds" appears in Nehemiah 13:14 in which Nehemiah prays,

Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and wipe not out my heseds that I have done for the house of my God and for his service.

But here LXX translates eleos.

Thus in the Septuagint translation, three items should be noted: (1) The Greek of the Septuagint is in a sense "special Greek" in that it consists of a vocabulary which has behind it the force of Hebrew words which had special meanings for members of the Jewish community. (2) The Septuagint does not represent the present Hebrew text. (3) The meanings of some Hebrew words had changed from the time of the original writing to the time of the translation into Greek. In some cases the Greek does not represent well the original meaning of the Hebrew, but it does represent the meaning of the Hebrew as understood in the Hellen-

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<sup>23</sup>Supra p. 40.

<sup>24</sup>I Kings 11:13, 32, 34-36; 15:4. II Kings 8:19, 20:6. Psalms 132:10. Isaiah 37:35.

istic period. In this connection a word must be said for the use of eleos to translate hesed. The unworthiness of man before God has always been recognized in the Hebrew tradition, but in later Judaism this sense of disparity had grown under the encouragement of the pietists until God's holiness and man's sinfulness was the issue in theology. What man needed from God was precisely eleos, "mercy." The description of the initiation into the community in the Manual of Discipline of the Dead Sea Scrolls contains the recitation of the sins of the initiants and of the fathers followed by the usual reminder of the hesed of God which has been with Israel from ancient times.<sup>25</sup> The words are interesting in light of the discussion about hesed and mercy.

The mercies of (rahame) his hesed  
he bestows upon us forever and ever.

Here the hesed of God clearly means the mercy which God shows to his people in redeeming them in spite of their sins and transgressions. In its use of dikaiois, eleos, and hosia, the Septuagint has caught much of the meaning of the idea of hesed. But it is very difficult to convey in translation that single word which carried at once all of these meanings plus all of the nuances which the distinctively Jewish experience had attached to it.

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<sup>25</sup>DSS Manual of Discipline, 1:16-2:1.

## OTHER TEXTUAL TRADITIONS

There are two further textual traditions to which one might look for further clues to the significance of hesed in the late Jewish period: the Aramaic targums and the Peshitta. As it turns out, neither of these sources adds much to our understanding of the word. The Aramaic Targum has of course at its disposal words which are very closely related to the original Hebrew. Hence it is not surprising to find that hesed is often rendered by the Aramaic hisda'. A second group of words used to translate hesed is derived from the root tub or tab, "good" or "goodness." One senses in the Aramaic Targum an attempt to "explain" a word whose meaning is in danger of being lost or at least diminished. Goodman notes in the case of the Targum renderings of hesed in the Psalter, "evidence of the apparent impossibility of finding any one Aramaic term which can adequately represent the different shades of meaning expressed by the Hebrew hesed."<sup>26</sup>

The Peshitta translates hesed either as rh'm' (mercy, compassion," as the Hebrew rahamim) or as tybwt'. This word derives from the root twb, meaning "to provide." It is often

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<sup>26</sup>A.E. Goodman, "Hesed and Todah in the Linguistic Tradition of the Psalter, in Peter R. Ackroyd and Barnabas Lindus (eds.) Words and Meanings (Cambridge: University Press, 1968), p. 110 ff.

used in the sense of bestowing a gift, favor, blessing, or grace. It is the normal Old Testament rendering of hesed. Whereas rhym' would seem to give content to hesed, tybwt' expresses action. Hesed is the mercy and grace which God gives to his faithful.

#### THE NEW TESTAMENT

Spicq<sup>27</sup> laments that most modern authors writing about the idea of love or goodness in the Bible have tended to write rather narrowly about agape and hesed. He observes that it is important to take note of the fact that the Septuagint has carefully avoided translating the latter word by the former. The various meanings of hesed have been noted in previous chapters in this paper. The Septuagint translations of hesed have been discussed in the first section of the present chapter. Before undertaking a discussion of the idea of hesed in the New Testament, a brief digression may be in order to consider why the Septuagint translators, although using agape to translate 16 different Hebrew words, did not even once use that Greek word to represent hesed. Hesed is basically the covenant relationship. Beyond that it is an attitude of good will and is sometimes described as "love." It is often associated with

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<sup>27</sup>Ceslaus Spicq, Agape, Prolegomena a une Etude de Theologie Neo-Testamentaire (Louvain: Nauwelaerts, 1955), p. 120.

other Hebrew words of the relational vocabulary: zedaqah (righteousness), 'emeth (faithfulness), or rahamim (mercy). These words indicate not only what hesed is, but by implication indicate what it is not. Hesed is righteousness, both in a moral and a teleological sense; it is truth and faithfulness in social relationships and dealings; it is compassion, mercy and personal concern for other persons. All of this is to say that it is not deviousness and deception; it is not lying or playing false; it is not cruelty or unconcern. Hesed refers both to human virtue and to the nature of God. As human virtue it is especially the virtue of the King: This virtue may be understood as both intense loyalty and as piety. It is absolutely dependable and immutable. Finally, it is inseparable from covenant language. Hesed is a noun; the verb form appears only rarely.<sup>28</sup> The idiom is 'asah hesed 'im, "to do hesed with." Hesed is a substantive, a "thing" which God abounds in and which God does with his faithful.

Agapao appears 263 times in the Septuagint. It is used 180 times to translate the Hebrew verb 'ahab. The substantives agape and agapesis are used 20 times and ten times respectively, and in every case translate the Hebrew noun 'ahabah. From this it is apparent that the translators of the Septuagint understood agapao/agape primarily as

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<sup>28</sup>As in Psalm 18:25. Supra pp. 51, 76 ff.

equivalent to the Hebrew 'ahab/'ahabah. The meaning of agapao is quite broad as it encompasses the notion of "love" from the divine love to the love of man for God and the love of man for a woman.<sup>29</sup> But the use of 'ahab or 'ahabah in the Old Testament for the love of God for man is relatively infrequent. What God extends to man is not generally ahabah, but hesed. Thus the Septuagint translators have only a few occasions to use agape or agapao in the sense of God's love for man.<sup>30</sup>

Hesed is the word which denotes Yahweh's special relationship to Israel. In a few instances the more general term ahabah is used. But whereas hesed brings to mind the loyalty, faithfulness, and the intense sense of commitment involved in a covenant relationship, 'ahabah conveys the more general notion of love: relationships which involve goodwill and attachment. Spicq has identified 'ahabah as being the primary of the two words, "hesed being only an

<sup>29</sup>Hosea 3:1 uses agapao in three senses in one sentence: "Go love a woman who loves evil things...even as the Lord loves the Children of Israel." For the use of agapao in the sense of a man's love for a woman, comp. Genesis 29:18, 34:3, Judges 16:4. Deuteronomy 6:5 commands, "You shall love the Lord your God..." Isaiah 61:8 proclaims, "For I am the Lord who loves justice." And Isaiah 63:9 speaks of the love of God for his people: "But he himself saved them because he loved them." For further references to the love of God for man, see the following note.

<sup>30</sup>Deuteronomy 7:13, 10:15. Isaiah 43:4, 63:9. Jeremiah 31:3 (LXX 38:3). Hosea 3:1, 9:15, 14:5. Zephaniah 3:17.

aspect and one manifestation of 'ahabah."<sup>31</sup> This view certainly does withstand the scrutiny of logical analysis, but seems to call for the observation that what denotes a very generalized concept often lacks the power to focus upon a specific element within that concept. 'Ahabah may include hesed, but only in very restricted and carefully defined context could it convey the meaning of hesed. The Septuagint translators were apparently quite conscious of the difference between hesed and 'ahabah. They understood 'ahabah as corresponding to the Greek agape or philos, but chose for the most part to use agape. As has been noted in the previous section, hesed is rendered mostly by eleos.

In investigating the hesed idea in the New Testament, one moves into an area in which there is no Hebrew or Aramaic original for comparison. There are, of course, quotations which come indirectly from the Hebrew, but the New Testament is basically a Greek literature, not a translation from another language.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, it is a collection of writings which express a theology quite distinct from the theology of the Old Testament. This is to say that some methodology must be adopted which is suitable to the problem at hand. In New Testament passages which clearly derive from the Old Testament, the problem of identifying the idea

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<sup>31</sup>Spicq, p. 121.

<sup>32</sup>The question of the Aramaic background of the gospels is of only minor importance in the present consideration.



of hesed is relatively simple. The word and its translation may be traced quite directly from the Old Testament to the New Testament, and the metamorphosis of meaning from the original to the New Testament rendering may be observed. But a more difficult question remains: how is the idea of hesed expressed in the New Testament in those cases where there is no clear derivation from a particular Old Testament passage. In this latter case, two questions might be asked: (1) Is the language that language which the Septuagint uses to express the hesed idea? (2) Does the context of the passage involve the covenant setting in which hesed is understood? An illustration of the former type of problem is furnished by the incident recorded in Matthew 9:13. Jesus, upon being criticized by the Pharisees for eating with tax collectors and non-observant Jews,<sup>33</sup> replied,

They that are whole do not need a physician, but they that are sick. But go and learn what it means, "I will have eleos and not sacrifice."

The quotation from Hosea 6:6 follows the Septuagint with the exception of the substitution of kai ou, "and not," for the disjunctive particle he. The force of the Greek has led some commentators to note that the quotation does

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<sup>33</sup>This suggestion is that of W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann for the translation of amartolon in this context. See The Anchor Bible XXVI (Garden City, Doubleday, 1964), p. 105.

not quite fit the context.<sup>34</sup> But if eleos is read as hesed, and hesed is understood in its earlier Hebrew meaning as the saving, caring relationship between God and man, and hence between man and man, the saying begins to come into focus in the way Jesus was using it. Hesed, as a caring ethic, is set against zabab, cultic observance. It might be noted further that the Davidic notion of hesed---the paternal leading of God into "right" ways, always caring, sometimes disciplining, but never rejecting---is surely what is intended here.<sup>35</sup> Jesus is saying that his entering into a caring (hesed) relationship with the non-pious Jews is more important than the strict torah observances of the Pharisees. Or in hesed language: doing hesed with one's fellow man is more important than being hasid (pious, hosios).

The first chapter of Luke's gospel contains many quotations or references to Old Testament scripture which are easily identifiable, and which in several cases point directly to the hesed idea. Luke 1:50, "And his eleos is from generation to generation upon those who fear him," is a direct quote of Psalm 103:17. The text is close to the Septuagint, except that the Septuagint reads aionos kai heos tou aionos ("forever and ever") where the New Testament

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<sup>34</sup>Sherman E. Johnson, "The Gospel According to St. Matthew," exegesis in The Interpreter's Bible (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1953), VII, 354.

<sup>35</sup>II Samuel 7:14-15.

reads eis geneas geneon ("from generation to generation").

The Septaugint is here closer to the Massoretic text. The eleos clearly represents the Hebrew hesed. Luke 1:54,

He has helped his servant Israel  
in remembrance of his mercy

is not a quotation from the Old Testament, but is reminiscent of Psalm 98:3 which puts the matter in terms of hesed:

He has remembered his hesed and faithfulness  
to the house of Israel.

The idea of salvation for the sake of hesed is not uncommon.

Three passages in the Psalms state the matter directly.

Psalm 6:4 is typical.<sup>36</sup>

Turn, O Yahweh, save my life;  
deliver me for the sake of thy hesed.

Luke 1:58,

And her neighbors and her cousins heard how the Lord  
had made great his eleos with her

is unmistakably a reference to the fact that Yahweh is rab hesed, "abounding in hesed," or "great in hesed."

The statement in Luke 1:68-75 is even more clearly a reference to hesed, as the matter is stated in covenant terms.

Praised be the Lord, the God of Israel, for he has  
visited and redeemed his people and has raised up a  
horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant  
David....that we should be saved from our enemies and  
from the hand of all who hate us; to do eleos with our  
fathers and to remember his holy covenant, the oath  
which he swore to our father Abraham, that he would  
grant unto us that we, being delivered out of the hand

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<sup>36</sup>See also Psalm 44:26, 115:1.

of our enemies, might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.

Here the hesed of God is understood as being fulfilled in the birth of Jesus. The language is overtly that of the Davidic covenant which is summed up in hesed which cannot be revoked. Just as hesed had been understood as particularly God's relationship to the Davidic king, and therefore it was by one's participation in the kingdom that hesed may be had,<sup>37</sup> so now hesed would be gotten through the Messiah. The numerous passages in the gospels which read essentially, "Have mercy upon me, O son of David,"<sup>38</sup> are rightly understood as petitions for participation in the Messianic kingdom, in which God's hesed will abound.

Of particular interest to the matter of covenant and hesed in the New Testament is Paul's discussion of the salvation of Israel in Romans 11:25-32. His argument is that God's purpose in the blindness of Israel is that the Gentiles might receive mercy and that when the full number of Gentiles will have come in, Israel will also receive mercy so that God may have mercy upon all. Paul understands the necessity for the salvation of Israel from the terms of the Old Testament covenant. In support of his thesis he quotes from Isaiah 59:20-21 and Isaiah 27:9. The latter

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<sup>37</sup>Supra p. 40.

<sup>38</sup>Matthew 9:27, 15:22, 20:30-31. Mark 10:47-48. Luke 18:38.

passage appears as

And this will be my covenant with them when I take away their sins.

Paul knows that the covenant cannot be revoked. He continues in verse 28b-29, "But as regards election they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers. For the gifts of God are irrevocable." Here the Davidic covenant tradition is unmistakable, but the saving relationship of hesed is to be extended to all people. Paul's concluding statement, "God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all,"<sup>39</sup> is surely an expression of the ideal of universal hesed in New Testament Pauline terms.

A similar theme is elaborated in I Peter 2:4-10. Again the point is that the gentiles were not the possessors of eleos, but now have obtained mercy.

Come unto him, to that living stone, rejected by men, but in God's sight chosen and precious. And like living stones, be yourselves built into a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture:

"Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone,  
a cornerstone, chosen and precious,  
and he who believes in him  
will not be made ashamed."<sup>40</sup>

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe,

'The very stone which the builders rejected  
has become the head of the corner"<sup>41</sup>

and

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<sup>39</sup>Romans 11:32.

<sup>40</sup>Isaiah 28:16.

<sup>41</sup>Psalms 118:22.

'A stone that will make men stumble,  
a rock that will make them fall.'<sup>42</sup>  
for they stumble because they disobey the word, as  
they were destined to do.

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a  
holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare  
the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of  
darkness into his marvelous light. Once you were  
no people, but now you are God's people; once you  
had not received mercy, but now you have received  
mercy.

The simile of the stone is also used in Daniel as the symbol  
for the Maccabean kingdom, which he believes to be established  
by God, and therefore eternal.<sup>43</sup> In the present text the  
stone is Jesus Christ who will establish the messianic  
kingdom. The simile of the stone and the particular  
phraseology, "chosen and precious," alerts one to the cove-  
nant content of the passage. The "chosen" are the possessors  
of the covenant, and "precious" is the nature of the terms  
of the covenant, of hesed itself.<sup>44</sup> In the New Testament  
the stone has become Christ. For those who believe, he is  
"precious"; for those who reject the gospel, he is a  
stumbling block.

The Christian community is now the chosen race. The

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<sup>42</sup>Isaiah 8:14. This peculiar combination of Isaiah  
28:16 and 8:14 appears in slightly different form in Romans  
9:33. Such consistencies and peculiarities of the manner of  
Old Testament quotations in the New Testament have led to  
the postulation of the Testimonia, a collection of Old Testa-  
ment proof texts for use by the early church. See Rendel  
Harris, Testimonies (Cambridge: University Press, 1916).

<sup>43</sup>Daniel 2:44-45.

<sup>44</sup>Supra p. 15.

line of receivership is traced from Abraham to David to the Messianic King to the fulfillment of the Ideal in Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Christ will receive the benefits of eleos (hesed) just as in former times in Israel those who associated themselves with the Jerusalem temple and the Davidic kingdom could share in the hesed of Yahweh. But "chosen" here is understood in the sense proclaimed by Deutero-Isaiah: not for special favor, but for special service. The present text must surely have been written with Isaiah 49:6 in mind. The Septuagint version of that passage reads,

It is a great thing for you to be called my servant, to establish the tribes of Jacob, to recover the dispersion of Israel. Behold, I have given you for the covenant of a race, for a light of the Gentiles, so that you should be for salvation to the end of the earth.

As Israel was called to be a light for the Gentiles, so the "New Israel" is called to "declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you." Perhaps reflecting briefly upon Hosea 1:9-10, the author reflects that the Gentiles once had not been called, i.e., were "no people," and had not received mercy; but after the call they received mercy. The conclusion here is similar to that of Paul in Romans 11:30-32. Those who are chosen receive the covenant and stand in the covenant relationship, the hesed/eleos relationship to God.

The question of the relationship between agape and

hesed has been raised above.<sup>45</sup> The Septuagint avoids the use of agape to translate hesed, yet the expressions of Yahweh's love for Israel often seem to reflect the same kind of relationship which is implied by hesed. Spicq<sup>46</sup> notes that when Yahweh demands ahabah from Israel, the relationship includes Israel's exclusive attachment to and worship of Yahweh, and a covenant of mutual responsibilities in which Yahweh will reserve his blessings for his special people. This relationship of ahabah is understood in the Septuagint as agape. Why then is hesed not agape in the Septuagint. A clue to the answer may be in the fact that whereas ahab, the verb form, is common in the Old Testament, and ahabah, the substantive, is relatively infrequent, hesed, the substantive, is frequent, and hasad, the verbal form, is quite rare. Thus ahab is usually expressed as an action, and hesed is a "thing." In the Septuagint translation agapao is frequent, agape is infrequent, hesed is frequent, and hasad is rare.<sup>47</sup> All of this seems to mean that hesed is understood as what is to be had as a result of the fact that God loves ('oheb) Israel. An agapao-agape combination to represent the dynamic of ahab-hesed would be somewhat redundant. Hence agapao-eleos seemed more appropriate to the translators. This understanding would, of course, carry

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<sup>45</sup>Supra p. 81 ff.

<sup>46</sup>Spicq, p. 200.

<sup>47</sup>Supra p. 83



over even into the relationship between agape and eleos; even though both are substantives, the latter is seen to be the result of the former. Ephesians 2:4 may reflect this understanding.

But God, rich in eleos, for his great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ.

The Septaugint uses plousios, "rich," to translate the Hebrew kabedh me'odh, "very heavy."<sup>48</sup> Thus the agape of God results in the great abundance of his eleos. Out of that irrevocable eleos he redeemed us.

Other New Testament eleos passages may parallel other Old Testament understandings of hesed. The conclusion of the story of the Good Samaritan contains the question posed by Jesus, "Now which of these three do you think was a neighbor to him who fell among thieves?" The answer is couched in a familiar Hebraism: "He that did eleos with him."<sup>49</sup> The reflection of the Hebrew idiom, 'asah hesed 'im, "to do hesed with," is unmistakable. In this passage eleos represents the "virtue" aspect of hesed.

One further passage serves to illustrate the passage of the hesed idea from the Old Testament into the new. The well-known beatitude, "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy,"<sup>50</sup> can certainly stand upon its own

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<sup>48</sup>Genesis 13:2.

<sup>49</sup>Luke 10:37.

<sup>50</sup>Matthew 5:7.

merit as commonly understood. No elaboration of the meaning of eleos is necessary to validate this saying of Jesus. But the line of investigation of the present paper may perhaps shed even a little more light on the full meaning of this beatitude. The peculiar Hebrew construction encountered in Psalm 18:25 has been discussed above.<sup>51</sup> It should be apparent that the Septuagint translators might well have rendered the passage, meta eleemon hoti autoi eleethese, "with the merciful he will have mercy." If the translators had in fact done this, the parallel between Matthew 5:7 and Psalm 18:25 would surely have been noted by many commentators. But such was not the case, and to this writer's knowledge no one has made reference to the Psalm passage as a possible basis for the beatitude. If the beatitude had circulated in Hebrew or Aramaic, it might well have been translated,

Blessed are those who do hesed,  
for they shall receive hesed.

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<sup>51</sup>Supra p. 51, 76 ff.

## Chapter VI

HESED AND SOME CONTEMPORARY VIEWS OF MAN

## A CONSIDERATION OF METHODOLOGY

Preliminary to a discussion of the hesed idea as reflected in the thought of two contemporary writers, a methodological statement seems to be in order. In attempting to relate hesed to the theology of Paul Tillich and to the psychology of Abraham Maslow, a difficulty is at once encountered: the categories used by Tillich and Maslow would appear to be so different from those of the Old Testament writers that the views might seem to be more in conflict than in agreement. The hesed of the Old Testament is described in terms of a covenant relationship between Israel and her God. This agreement meant that Israel would serve Yahweh and him only. In return, Yahweh would do hesed with Israel. Hesed is taken to mean acting in zedaqah, the "right" way to bring shalom, "prosperity," to Israel. Yahweh would deal with her in mercy and compassion, give her security and salvation which was described in very concrete terms as safety and deliverance from her enemies. The question of the dependence of Yahweh's continuing hesed upon Israel's keeping torah was never quite settled. The Mosaic tradition and the tradition of the prophets understood hesed as contingent upon keeping the law; the

Abrahamic-Davidic tradition as echoed in the Psalms seemed to indicate that hesed would not be repealed, even when Israel sinned. The relationship of Yahweh to his people was that of a father to his sons: he would not cast them off for their transgressions; he would chastise them within the loving relationship. But even in the remarkable consistency of the Psalms there is a note of doubt. Where the Davidic covenant of II Samuel affirms hesed in spite of the king's falling away,<sup>1</sup> Psalm 132 places an introductory condition upon the continuation of the dynasty: "If your sons keep my covenant and my testimonies which I shall teach them..."<sup>2</sup> But the overwhelming thrust of the message of the Psalms where it concerns hesed is that "His hesed endures forever!"<sup>3</sup> In these passages hesed is often associated with 'emeth, "faithfulness" or "truth,"<sup>4</sup> or with 'emunah, that which is established and can therefore be depended upon. As Yahweh does hesed with persons, so one is admonished to do hesed with one's neighbor. This hesed between persons is the zedaqah, the "right way," revealed in the Torah. It is often described as mishpat, "justice." As Yahweh deals in 'emeth, so man will deal in 'emeth. This term carries both the idea of dependability and of truth.

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<sup>1</sup>II Samuel 7:14-15.

<sup>2</sup>Psalm 132:12.

<sup>3</sup>Psalms 100:5, 106:1, 107:1, 117:2, 118:1, 2, 3, 29; 138:8.

<sup>4</sup>Psalms 85:10, 138:2.

It means at once that Yahweh is consistent and that satisfactory relationships must be founded in truth as opposed to sheger, "lying" or "deceitfulness." This hesed relationship between persons, as the relationship between Yahweh and Israel, is always in the context of rahamim, "mercy, tenderness, compassion."

All of this has been developed in the foregoing pages in terms of Israel's understanding of Yahweh as a God who is both imminent and transcendent. Yahweh is clearly the God "out there;" he exists as a surpassingly great being. In the more anthropomorphic expressions of the Old Testament, Yahweh is one who strolls in the garden with Adam and Eve,<sup>5</sup> shuts the door for Noah,<sup>6</sup> has lunch with Abraham,<sup>7</sup> and writes the tablets of the testimony for Moses.<sup>8</sup> In his more transcendent aspects, Yahweh is the holy "other" before whom man cannot stand. In the presence of this "holy other" Isaiah can only cry, "Woe is me...for I am a man of unclean lips."<sup>9</sup>

But what is apparent in the writings of prophets, saints, philosophers and theologians (among others) is that the writer is often confused about categories. That is to say that writers often think they are writing about the

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<sup>5</sup>Genesis 3:8

<sup>6</sup>Genesis 7:16.

<sup>7</sup>Genesis 18:1-8.

<sup>8</sup>Exodus 31:18.

<sup>9</sup>Isaiah 6:5.

objective world when, in fact, they are writing about subjective experience. All of this is not very surprising once it is understood that subjective experiences are almost of necessity communicated in the very symbolic terms which make them appear to be events in the objective world. This symbolic language is often understood literally. If in this post-Freudian era, this principle may be allowed as more-or-less self-evident, we may proceed to develop a methodology which will make possible the rapprochement of the hesed of the Old Testament and the writings of Maslow and Tillich.

Another way of stating the matter is that theological statements are couched in a particular symbolic language which is often mistaken for the truth itself. An immediate impulse would be to demythologize the statements and examine the "naked" truth. But such efforts are at best only partly successful, for what will have happened is that one set of symbols will have been substituted for another. Tillich puts the matter thus:

The reason for this transformation of concepts into symbols is the character of ultimacy and the nature of faith. That which is the true ultimate transcends the realm of finite reality infinitely. Therefore, no finite reality can express it directly and properly...But faith, understood as the state of being ultimately concerned, has no language other than symbols.<sup>10</sup>

In choosing one set of symbols over another, the question is

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<sup>10</sup>Paul Tillich, Dynamics of Faith (New York: Harper & Row, 1957), pp. 44-45.

primarily one of adequacy. The Biblical writers used their particular sets of symbols because those symbols could communicate the ultimate concerns of the community in terms of its own experience and historical mythology. It may be helpful at this point to translate some of the symbols which were particularly meaningful to ancient Israel into symbols which are more universally useful in the twentieth century. Hence, Israel's relationship to Yahweh may be understood as the personal relationship to the Transcendent. The value of this symbol is that it has the power to communicate at once the idea of the Reality "beyond," the Reality "beneath," and the Reality "within," and the Reality "behind." In this we can see a fundamental unity of the ideas of the Transcendent, whether expressed as Yahweh, the God of Israel, or the Ground of Being. Hesed, then, may be understood as expressing the nature of one's essential relationship to the Transcendent in three dimensions: (1) one's relationship to the Transcendent beyond oneself, (2) one's relationship to the Transcendent within oneself, and (3) one's relationship to the Transcendent as expressed in the selfhood of others.

The essential unity of the nature of the relationship to the Transcendent beyond oneself and the relationship to the Transcendent as expressed in the selfhood of one's neighbor has long been recognized. The hesed idea in the Old Testament grew out of the covenant relationship between persons. The same word and correlative value-laden terms are used to describe the relationship to God. When Jesus

is pressed for the "Great Commandment," he responds in terms of the obvious, the shem'a: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind."<sup>11</sup> But to this he adds a corollary: "And the second is like unto it, you shall love your neighbor as yourself."<sup>12</sup> The inseparableness of the notion of love in the "vertical" dimension and love in the "horizontal" dimension is spelled out by the author of I John.

If anyone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.<sup>13</sup>

In the Old Testament it is the hesed of Yahweh which is expressed towards one's neighbor.<sup>14</sup> This unity of the love for neighbor and the love for God prevents the total abstraction of the "love of God" idea. The notion of hesed itself is always something to do; it is never entirely abstract. It may, of course, involve an attitude, but it is always expressed as an active doing. That the hesed, which is of God, is expressed towards one's neighbor insures that hesed will always be concrete in its expression. Tillich states the necessity for this concrete relationship in his discussion of the ontological nature of love:

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<sup>11</sup>Matthew 22:37; Deuteronomy 6:5.

<sup>12</sup>Matthew 22:39; Leviticus 19:18.

<sup>13</sup>I John 4:20.

<sup>14</sup>I Samuel 20:14, II Samuel 9:3, etc.



He who cannot relate himself as an 'I' to a 'thou' cannot relate himself to the true and the good and to the ground of being in which they are rooted. He who cannot love the friend cannot love the artistic expression of ultimate reality.<sup>15</sup>

It is this concrete-abstract nature that gives hesed its universality. Tillich supports the claim to universality of the Christian doctrine of the Incarnation on precisely these grounds. He says,

It seems paradoxical if one says that only that which is absolutely concrete can also be absolutely universal and vice versa, but it describes the situation adequately. Something that is merely abstract has a limited universality because it is restricted to the realities from which it is abstracted. Something that is merely particular has a limited concreteness because it must exclude other particular realities in order to maintain itself as concrete. Only that which has the power of representing everything abstract is absolutely universal. This leads to a point where the absolutely concrete and the absolutely universal are identical.<sup>16</sup>

This is not to suggest that the argument for the universality of the Christian doctrine of the Logos and the argument for the universality of the idea of hesed are quite the same thing, but Tillich's point is quite applicable as a criterion for judgment in any claim for universality of a theological idea.

The essential unity of the relationship to the Transcendent "out there" and the relationship to the Transcendent

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<sup>15</sup>Paul Tillich, Love, Power, and Justice (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), p. 31.

<sup>16</sup>Paul Tillich, Systematic Theology (Chicago: University Press, 1951), I, 16.

"within" is often implied in the Biblical materials, but the matter is seldom if ever explicit because the Transcendent is understood to be in fact "out there" and not within. Thus when Saul's mental condition begins to deteriorate, his attendants understand the phenomenon in terms of "an evil spirit from God."<sup>17</sup> This is but one of many possible examples of Biblical narrative in which the subjective experience is understood as something transpiring "out there." The Manual of Discipline of the Dead Sea Scrolls depicts the subjective struggles of man as conflicts between good and evil spirits.

He created man to have dominion over the world and made for him two spirits, that he might walk by them until the time of his visitation. They are the spirits of truth and of error....In the hand of the Prince of Lights is dominion over all the Sons of Righteousness ....And in the hand of the Angel of Darkness is all dominion over the sons of error....and all the spirits of his type try to make the Sons of Light stumble, but the God of Israel and his Angel of Truth have helped all the Sons of Light....Thus far the spirits of truth and of error struggle in the heart of a man.<sup>18</sup>

Thus the source of the internal struggle is understood to be in an external transcendent realm of the spirit. The consensus of contemporary thinking, of course, understands the source of internal personal struggle as originating within the person himself.

All of the foregoing is suggested as clues to support the intuition that writers who describe experience as origi-

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<sup>17</sup>I Samuel 16:14-23.

<sup>18</sup>DSS Manual of Discipline 3:17-25, 4:23.

nating in a transcendent "out there" and writers who describe experience as originating within the self are describing the same existential experience.

This notion seems particularly relevant for a discussion of the relationship of the idea of hesed to the writings of Abraham Maslow, for Maslow does not couch his discussion in religious symbols, but generally uses the terminology of contemporary psychology along with such terminology as he finds necessary to invent in order to convey his insights. He postulates an intrinsic, biologically-based "inner nature" which the healthy person has learned to foster and encourage and the neurotic has learned to deny and suppress.<sup>19</sup> His "psychology of health"<sup>20</sup> is based upon a study of persons who were judged to be exceptionally mentally healthy and who possessed a characteristic which Maslow calls "self-actualization."<sup>21</sup> Initially he defined the term as "the full use and exploitation of talent, capacities, potentialities, etc.," saying that "such people seem to be fulfilling themselves and doing the best that

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<sup>19</sup>Abraham Maslow, Toward a Psychology of Being (New York: Van Nostrand, 1968), p. 3 ff.

<sup>20</sup>As opposed to Freudian psychology based on the illness model.

<sup>21</sup>Frank Gobel, The Third Force, the Psychology of Abraham Maslow (New York: Pocket Books, 1971), p. 25 ff.

they are capable of doing."<sup>22</sup> Later he redefined the term:

Self actualization is an episode or a spurt in which the powers of the person come together in a particularly efficient and intensely enjoyable way, and in which he is more integrated and less split, more open for experience, more idiosyncratic, more perfectly expressive or spontaneous, or fully functioning, more creative, more humorous, more ego transcending, more independent of his lower needs, etc. He becomes in these episodes more truly himself, more perfectly actualizing his potentialities, closer to the core of his Being, more fully human.<sup>23</sup>

The process of growth toward self-actualization is described as a long series of subjective experiences of choosing and learning to choose for growth rather than for security.

Maslow notes emphatically that one must learn to choose for himself and for his own self, i.e., for his own "delight experiences."<sup>24</sup> No one can choose for another, for this would diminish the ability to perceive one's own internal delight and to differentiate one's own judgments and feelings from the interiorized feelings of another.<sup>25</sup> Such a dynamic certainly involves what might be described as a transcendent self or the "Transcendent within" as one is able to stand outside the self and choose for the self or choose to deny the self.

In his study of self-actualized persons, Maslow

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<sup>22</sup>Mary Harrington Hall, "A Conversation with Abraham H. Maslow," Psychology Today, (July 1968), cited in Gobel, p. 24.

<sup>23</sup>Maslow, p. 97.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 49

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 50.

encountered a particular kind of cognition which, in contrast to ordinary deficiency-motivated cognition, is able to penetrate more perceptively into the realities or the Being of the thing-itself.<sup>26</sup> Of special interest to the present discussion are the values which Maslow noted as being reported by persons experiencing "B-cognition."<sup>27</sup> These values will be discussed in connection with the values associated with hesed.

In devising a methodology for translating Old Testament thought into contemporary terms, Paul Tillich is helpful in at least two main ways. First, his "method of correlation" is an attempt to establish the relationship between the questions which arise from the existential experience and the answers which are couched in theological terms. Second, his ontological analysis of concepts such as love, faith, etc., often results in definitions which are stated in "neutral" terms which do not assume any particular concrete experience but which are relevant to all concrete experience in which such a concept might arise.

Tillich describes his method of correlation as used in theology as having at least three meanings: (1) the correlation between religious symbols and what is symbolized, (2) the correlation between concepts denoting the human and those denoting the divine, and (3) the correlation between

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 73.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 83.

man's ultimate concern and the object of his ultimate concern.<sup>28</sup> But the method is mainly concerned with the existential question and the theological answer.<sup>29</sup> The exact relationship between the two is not a simple one to define. Tillich understands that they are independent of each other; i.e., one cannot be derived from the other; yet there is an interdependence. This interdependence is described in terms of an ellipse in which one focus is the existential question and the other is the theological answer. He explains the analogy thus:

Both are within the sphere of the religious commitment, but they are not identical. The material of the existential question is taken from the whole of human experience and its manifold ways of expression. This refers to past and present, to popular language and great literature, to art and philosophy, to science and psychology. It refers to myth and liturgy, to religious tradition, and to present experiences.<sup>30</sup>

The theological focus of this "theological circle" means that the theologian, on the basis of his very concrete experience, makes universal claims which are couched in the language of theology.<sup>31</sup>

The language in which Tillich couches his theological discussion is quite helpful in that it lends itself to a universalism which detaches it from any particular concrete

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<sup>28</sup>Tillich, Systematic, I, 59 ff.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid., I, 62.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., II, 14.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid.

expression but allows it to speak to every concrete expression. For example, his definition of love as "the drive toward the unity of the separated"<sup>32</sup> lifts up the essential nature of every experience of love. This definition does not deny the emotional accompaniments of love or the particular experience in which love arises, but it allows us to see the ontological nature of love which is relevant to an understanding of every occasion in which love is operative. His definition of faith as "the state of being ultimately concerned"<sup>33</sup> illuminates the unity of all experiences of faith, whether taking as an object the ultimate, something non-ultimate, or any particular expression of the ultimate. Thus Tillich's methodology provides a kind of bridge by which the common elements of various particular experiences and expressions may be linked.

The final question of methodology must be to ask just what it is that is to be related. The present task is to relate hesed to the thinking of Abraham Maslow and Paul Tillich. But neither Maslow nor Tillich use terms which make correspondence with the hesed idea readily apparent. The question then is in what categories can correspondence possibly be established? The answer is in experience and value. This is to say that there may be a common kind of

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<sup>32</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 25.

<sup>33</sup>Tillich, Dynamics, p. 1.

experience which gives rise to particular values which can be identified in the Old Testament hesed idea, in the theology of Paul Tillich, and in the psychology of Abraham Maslow. As it turns out, the experience is most clearly described by Tillich as separation and the subsequent drive toward reunion; the values are most succinctly described by Maslow in his discussion of the values of B-cognition or "universal values."

#### HESED AND THE THEOLOGY OF PAUL TILLICH

It is clear from the previous chapters dealing with the nature of hesed that the idea of hesed grew out of the experience of separation. Abimelek asked Abraham to do hesed with him because Abraham and Abimelek as individuals with distinct and sometimes conflicting interests had a need to overcome their separation with a creative relationship which would affirm both of them.<sup>34</sup> Jonathan's plea to David is that his hesed will not be cut off from Jonathan's house.<sup>35</sup> Hesed is often used in the Psalms in the context of a prayer for a continuing relationship to Yahweh.

Do not, thou, O Yahweh, withhold thy mercy from me,  
let thy hesed and thy faithfulness ever preserve  
me!<sup>36</sup>

When sin is understood as separation, the prayer for hesed is even more poignant:

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<sup>34</sup>Genesis 21:22 ff.

<sup>35</sup>I Samuel 20:16.

<sup>36</sup>Psalms 4:11.



Be mindful of thy mercy, O Yahweh, and of Thy hesed,  
 for they have been from of old.  
 Remember not the sins of my youth, or my transgressions;  
 according to thy hesed remember me,  
 for the sake of thy goodness, O Yahweh!<sup>37</sup>

It is the hesed of Yahweh which is able to overcome sin and separation.

Tillich describes this dynamic in his discussion of the ontology of love. As noted above, he defines love as that which drives the separated toward reunion.<sup>38</sup> This statement assumes that what is driven toward union was an originally a unity. There is no basis for love between elements which are absolutely strange. It is the estranged which is striving for reunion. The Biblical tradition states this estrangement of man from God in numerous ways, but always there is the underlying assumption of original unity. The Genesis 3 story tells of the estrangement in terms of disobedience to God. But on a slightly deeper level the story tells of man's becoming an individual in the sense that his decision-making center is no longer in God but in himself. This is to say that Adam and Eve became centered persons. But in becoming centered selves, they became estranged from God and from each other. Tillich describes the relationship of love to this separation of self from self:

Love manifests its greatest power there where it overcomes the greatest separation. And the greatest separation is the separation of self from self. Every self is self-related, and a complete self is completely self-

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<sup>37</sup>Psalm 25:6-7.

<sup>38</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 25.

related. It is an independent centre, indivisible and impenetrable, and therefore is rightly called an individual....It is the fulfillment and the triumph of love that it is able to reunite the most radically separated beings, namely individual persons. The individual person is both most separated and the bearer of the most powerful love.<sup>39</sup>

Hesed is used most often to describe the drive toward unity of that which is even more radically separated: the individual person and the ground of being. From the Adam and Eve story through the remainder of the pages of the Bible there is, even among the affirmations of the steadfast nature of Yahweh's hesed, a profound sense of estrangement from God. This is expressed perhaps nowhere more dramatically than in Jesus' cry from the cross, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"<sup>40</sup> In Tillich's analysis it is the radical degree of separation which calls forth the "infinite passion for God."<sup>41</sup> It is this separation which both makes possible the powerful dynamic of hesed (the depth of love) and creates the anxiety that hesed may cease; i.e., Yahweh's hesed will not in fact be great enough to overcome his separation from Israel.

Has his hesed for ever ceased?  
Are his promises at an end for all time?<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup>Ibid., p. 25-26.

<sup>40</sup>Psalm 22:1, Matthew 27:46, Mark 15:34.

<sup>41</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup>Psalm 77:8.

The final answer for Israel is "His hesed endures forever!"<sup>43</sup>  
 Paul understood grace as equal to every separation: "Where sin increased, grace abounded the more."<sup>44</sup>

Tillich, in his well-known sermon based upon this passage from Romans, brings together a number of the foregoing ideas. First, he suggests that sin is separation.

Perhaps the word "sin" has the same root as the word "asunder." In any case, sin is separation. To be in the state of sin is to be in the state of separation.<sup>45</sup>

Second, he affirms the threefold aspect of separation:

And separation is threefold: there is separation among individual lives, separation of man from himself, and separation of all men from the Ground of Being.<sup>46</sup>

But separation is the human fate in a very special way: man knows that he is separated. "We know that we are estranged from something to which we really belong, and with which we should be united."<sup>47</sup> This consciousness of separation means that it is not only fate, but it is also guilt. And "separation which is fate and guilt constitutes the meaning of the word 'sin.'"<sup>48</sup> Third, he affirms the unity of the threefold aspect of separation:

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<sup>43</sup>Psalm 100:5, 107:1, 118:1, 29; 136:1-26.

<sup>44</sup>Romans 5:20.

<sup>45</sup>Paul Tillich, The Shaking of the Foundations (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1948), p. 154.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid., p. 154-155.      <sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 155.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 161

Thus, the state of our whole life is estrangement from others and ourselves, because we are estranged from the Ground of our being, because we estranged from the origin and aim of our life....We are separated from the mystery, the depth, and the greatness of our existence.<sup>49</sup>

In this sermon, Tillich uses "grace" rather than "love" to express what overcomes the separation. Love is defined in Love, Power, and Justice as "the drive towards the unity of the separated."<sup>50</sup> But here Tillich is referring to that awareness of the unity of that which is separated. He says, "We do not even have a knowledge of sin unless we have already experienced the unity of life, which is grace."<sup>51</sup>

Tillich's discussion of love, separation, and grace clarifies the Old Testament concept of hesed in at least three ways: First, his definition of love as the drive toward the reunion of the separated is seen as identical with the dynamic of hesed. Hesed is above all God's seeking Israel. Beyond that it is Israel's response of loyalty and devotion which is an expression of her attempt to overcome her separation from God. Furthermore, it was the relationship with one's fellow man in personal and social encounter. Second, hesed is that which God does which overcomes the separation described above. This does not mean that separation is eliminated; separation is a condition of existence. It means that the fact of essential unity is established

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<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 25.

<sup>51</sup>Tillich, Shaking, p. 153.

and hesed is always adequate to bridge the separation. Third, Tillich has shown the threefold nature of separation, and hence the three dimensions in which hesed must operate: the dimensions of the persons of God, the person to his neighbor, and the person to himself.

The first two of these dimensions are clearly understood in the Old Testament. Hesed is first described as the relationship of man to his neighbor, but it is most often used as that which God does with man. The third dimension, man's separation from himself, is not clearly spelled out, but there are instances in which this is surely the actual intent of the meaning of the statements. The word nephesh (soul) is sometimes used as a device to express man's ability to stand outside himself and look at himself---the self regarding the self. When the Psalmist asks,

Why are you cast down, O my soul,  
and why are you disquieted within me?  
Hope in God; for I shall again praise him,  
my help and my God.<sup>52</sup>

he knows that what is troubled is that transcendent self which knows it is separated from God, yet knows it belongs to God. Man, in his ability to stand outside himself and know his own fragmentation, experiences separation from God and separation from himself as identical experiences. The self estranged from itself is experienced as the self estranged from God and controlled by the demonic. Paul

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<sup>52</sup>Psalm 42:5, 11; 43:5.

relates this in his letter to the Romans:

For the good I would do, I do not, but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that which I would not, it is no more that I do it, but sin that dwells in me.<sup>53</sup>

He sensed a split within himself which Tillich describes as "a split between his conscious will and his real will, between himself and something strange within and alien to him....and that estrangement he called 'sin.'"<sup>54</sup> The Psalmist experienced this estrangement within himself and wrote of the salvation God offers from this separation:

But God will ransom my soul from the power of Sheol, for he will receive me.<sup>55</sup>

The estrangement which the Psalmist experiences as the "power of Sheol" (non-being) is overcome as the separation from the Ground of Being is overcome.

This discussion of the estrangement of the self from itself raises a question about the dimensions of love. We have dealt with love which is the drive toward the reunion of the separated in two dimensions: person to person and the individual to God. But the matter of love as a drive towards reunion of the separated within the self leads to the question of the love of self. Tillich is skeptical of the term "self-love" as a concept. He argues that if love is a drive towards the reunion of the separated, there is no

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<sup>53</sup>Romans 7:19-20.

<sup>54</sup>Tillich, Shaking, p. 159.

<sup>55</sup>Psalm 49:15.

real meaning to the term "self-love," "for within the unity of self-consciousness there is no real separation comparable to the separation of a self-centered being from all other beings."<sup>56</sup> Yet on other contexts Tillich asserts the desirability and the difficulty of self-love.

He who is able to love himself is able to love others also; he who has learned to overcome self-contempt has overcome his contempt for others. But the depth of our separation lies in just the fact that we are not capable of great and merciful divine love towards ourselves.<sup>57</sup>

The problem for Tillich is that self-love is used in the various senses of "self-affirmation," "selfishness," and "self-acceptance." In Love, Power, and Justice<sup>58</sup> Tillich suggests that self-love be replaced by one of these terms. In Systematic Theology he suggests that there is a self love in terms of agape in which man loves himself as the "eternal image in the divine life."<sup>59</sup>

Man can have other forms of love toward himself, such as simple self-affirmation, libido, friendship, and eros. None of these forms is evil as such. But they become evil where they are not under the criterion of self-love in the sense of agape. Where this criterion is lacking, proper self-love becomes false self-love, namely, a selfishness which is always connected with self-contempt and self-hate. The distinction between these two contradictory forms of self-love is extremely important. The one is the image of the divine self-

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<sup>56</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 33.

<sup>57</sup>Tillich, Shaking, p. 158.

<sup>58</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 34.

<sup>59</sup>Tillich, Systematic, I, 282.

love; the other contradicts divine self-love. The divine self-love includes all creatures; and proper human self-love includes everything with which man is existentially united.<sup>60</sup>

The question which Tillich seems to be struggling with in all of this is in self-love, which estranged elements of the self are reunited? Self-love in the sense of agape means that the conscious self is united with that in oneself which is "the eternal image in the divine life," i.e., that real self, nephesh, Being, which knows that it is of God.

In elaborating this third dimension of love and separation, self-love and separation from oneself, Tillich enriches the hesed idea by raising the question by implication of the meaning of "doing hesed with oneself." In the Old Testament discussion the meaning of doing hesed with one's neighbor or God's doing hesed with man was explored at length. But if the ontology of love and the ontology of hesed are in fact identical, the question of doing hesed with oneself must be answered. This matter will be discussed in connection with the psychology of Abraham Maslow.

A further indication of the essential unity of love and hesed is to be found in Tillich's discussion of the ontological unity of love and justice. Justice is the form of the reunion of the separated.<sup>61</sup> It is an intrinsic claim raised by a being on the basis of its power of being. This

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid.

<sup>61</sup>Tillich, Love, p. 62.



claim expresses the form in which a thing or a person is actualized.<sup>62</sup> The question here is, of course, one of adequacy. This question will be elaborated below.

Tillich understands the second form of justice as tributive: it attributes to beings what they are and claim to be; it gives to any being the proportion of goods which is due to him; it deprives and punishes as the being deserves. But tributive justice is never adequate because intrinsic justice is dynamic and cannot be defined in definite terms. The ultimate intrinsic claim for justice in a being is "fulfillment within the unity of universal fulfillment. The religious symbol for this is the kingdom of God."<sup>63</sup> All of this points to a third form of justice which Tillich calls "transforming or creative justice."<sup>64</sup>

The ordinary word for justice in the Old Testament is mishpat. This word corresponds in general to what Tillich calls "tributive justice," but it is not limited to it. Tillich is quite correct when he insists that the main emphasis of the justice of the Bible goes in another direction, in the direction of creative justice.<sup>65</sup> It is noteworthy that Tillich points to the zadigim, the "just ones," as those who exemplify creative justice in the Old Testa-

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<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 63

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 65.

ment.<sup>66</sup> As has been noted in the previous chapters, it is not mishpat, but zedeqah which is often associated with hesed. The zadiqim "subject themselves to the divine order according to which everything in nature and history is created and moves."<sup>67</sup> But their subjection is not just to Torah; it is loving obedience to Yahweh who is the source of the Torah. Thus, then the relationship is turned around and zedeqah is Yahweh's "justice" toward Israel, it is not a legal matter, but it is a creative justice which is expressed in "the divine grace which forgives in order to reunite."<sup>68</sup> This justice does not destroy mishpat. To do so would be to surrender to chaos. The claims of tributive justice are valid, but creative justice goes beyond those claims. Yahweh's doing hesed with Israel involves doing both mishpat and zedeqah. In the former, intrinsic claims and the demands of proportional justice are recognized; in the latter, these claims are not denied, but are transcended so that those who would be excluded from fulfillment according to proportional justice may be fulfilled. Thus Paul's so-called doctrine of "justification by faith" may be read more carefully. Tillich calls it "justification by grace through faith."<sup>69</sup> The context of the passage becomes clear in the light of the foregoing discussion. Creative justice

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<sup>66</sup>Ibid.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 66

<sup>68</sup>Ibid.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid.

allows for the justification of him who is unjust.

Therefore, since we are made just (*dikaiothentes*) by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have obtained access to his grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in our hope of sharing the glory of God.<sup>70</sup>

Tillich's discussion of justice and his elaboration of the Old Testament zadiqim and the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith sharpens the understandings of the doctrine of continuing hesed. The Abrahamic-Davidic covenant tradition becomes more clear as Yahweh's chastisement may fulfill the demands of mishpat, but through creative zedaqah his hesed will remain even for those who in terms of distributive justice do not deserve it.

#### HESED AND THE PSYCHOLOGY OF ABRAHAM MASLOW

In the initial section of this chapter some of the assumptions of the psychology of Abraham Maslow were stated: the reality of the "inner nature" and the legitimate goal of life as "self-actualization."

About the nature of the inner nature, Maslow writes,

We have, each of us, an essential biologically-based inner nature, which is to some degree "natural," intrinsic, given, and in a certain limited sense, unchangeable, or, at least, unchanging.<sup>71</sup>

He further assumes that this inner nature is not evil, and that it may even be good. The contrast to the Freudian psychology is clear. Man is not essentially evil, nor are

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<sup>70</sup>Romans 5:1-2.

<sup>71</sup>Maslow, p. 3.

his "natural" tendencies such that they should be held in check or redirected by a superego. Maslow understands mental health as an outgrowth of the fostering and nurturing of one's essential nature. Mental illness, on the other hand, is a result of the denial or suppression of this inner nature.<sup>72</sup> The legitimate goal of life then is self-actualization: becoming what one really is. Maslow proposes for our age which has given up the ideal of the saint, the hero, the knight, or the mystic, we might adopt the model of the self-fulfilling human being, "the one in whom all his potentialities are coming to full development, the one whose inner nature expresses itself freely, rather than being warped, suppressed, or denied."<sup>73</sup>

The matter of fostering the inner nature is for Maslow an issue with very real built-in consequences.

The serious thing for each person to recognize vividly and poignantly, each for himself, is that every falling away from species virtue, every crime against one's own nature, every evil act, every one without exception records itself in our unconscious and makes us despise ourselves...If we do something we are ashamed of, it "registers" to our discredit, and if we do something honest or fine or good, it registers to our credit. The new results ultimately are either one or the other ... either we respect and accept ourselves or we despise ourselves and feel contemptible, worthless, and unlovable.<sup>74</sup>

One of the important crossroads of life is that place where

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid., p. 4.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 5.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

one learns to choose himself and the demands of his own inner nature or decides that the safety and security of the approval of others is ultimately more important than his own needs for growth and actualization. The choice is that of the individual. No one can make it for him; no one should make it for him. To do so would be to destroy his own sense of Being, the possibility of experiencing "delight" at his own selfhood. In terms discussed above in connection with Tillich, such a choice made by another would be an act of injustice as it would fail to recognize the intrinsic claim of the individual as a self; it would destroy selfhood. Selfhood would be destroyed in two ways: (1) the denial of the self as a decision making center; and (2) the denial of the possibility of learning to differentiate between the values of self and the internalized values of another.<sup>75</sup>

In this discussion of the inner nature and one's learning to choose in favor of it, the relationship to the dynamic of hesed becomes clear. Maslow's concern is for what might be called the "third dimension" of hesed: doing hesed with one's self. This idea meets the criteria for the ontology of love and hesed in that it is the drive for the reunion of estranged elements: the conscious self with the Inner Nature; and it accomplished this reunion within the context of justice: the intrinsic claim for selfhood is affirmed. Thus Maslow describes in very existential terms

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<sup>75</sup>Ibid., p. 45 ff.

what the Old Testament writer expressed in religious symbols and what Tillich analyzes in theological language: man's estrangement and reunion with himself.

The choice for growth, however, does have some external determinants. Maslow's most-quoted contribution to psychology is probably his "hierarchy of needs" which with the basic survival needs---air, food, water---and ascends through the need for love, esteem and self-esteem to the need for self-actualization. Maslow characterizes the "lower" needs as "deficiency needs," and the "higher" ones as "growth needs." The person whose "D-needs" are satisfied may be able to concern himself with the "B-needs," needs which arise from growth motivation. The self-actualizing, growth-motivated individual is characterized by decreased dependence upon his environment, the ability to perceive and relate to persons as persons, self-sufficiency in problem-solving, non-judgmental perception, and an ability to enter into a love relationship which is totally accepting and affirming of the partner.<sup>76</sup> In a study of "peak experiences," experiences of unusually heightened awareness in self-actualized persons, Maslow discovered certain characteristics of this sharpened perception which he calls "B-cognition."<sup>77</sup> In this type of cognition the perceptual object tends to be seen as a whole, detached from relations and

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<sup>76</sup>Ibid., p. 21-43.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 74 ff.

from considerations of usefulness or expediency. The precept is given full attention so that there is a complete absorption of the subject in the object. This means that a person may be seen in himself, perceived as he actually is, without the distortion which ordinarily results from the needs of the perceiver. Objects are perceived as independent of human need and the world of human purpose. Whereas in ordinary perception the repeated experience may lead to boredom and loss of attention, repeated B-cognizing seems to deepen the appreciation of the object and sharpen the sense of inherent value. Maslow writes of this phenomenon:

I have found to my own satisfaction (although I have not tried to prove it) that repeated exposures to what I consider a good painting will make the painting look more beautiful to people preselected as perceptive and sensitive, while repeated exposures to what I consider a bad painting will make it look less beautiful. The same seems to be true for good people and bad people, cruel or mean ones for instance. Seeing the good ones repeatedly seems to make them look better. Seeing the bad ones repeatedly tends to make them look worse.<sup>78</sup>

This cognition is an unneeding, egoless perception in which the perceiver may even identify with the perceived in a "super-ordinate unit." Maslow compares this perception with the perception of the gods, who can contemplate the wholeness of Being. In this divine perception there is no blame, condemnation, disappointment, or shock. If we could be godlike in our perceptions, "our only possible emotions would be pity, charity, kindness, and perhaps sadness of

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 77.

B-amusement with the shortcomings of the other."<sup>79</sup> The contrast of this perception with our ordinary perception is marked sharply by Maslow. He describes it thus:

Ordinarily we proceed under the aegis of means-values, i.e., of usefulness, desirability, badness, or goodness, of suitability for purpose. We evaluate, control, judge, condemn or approve. We laugh-at rather than laugh-with. We react to experience in personal terms and perceive the world in reference to ourselves and our ends, thereby making the world no more than means to our ends. This is the opposite of being detached from the world, which means in turn that we are not really perceiving it, but perceiving ourselves in it and it in ourselves. We perceive then in a deficiency-motivated way and can therefore perceive only D-values. This is different from perceiving the whole world, or that portion of it which in the peak experience we take as a surrogate for the world. Then and only then can we perceive its values rather than our own.<sup>80</sup>

The values which emerge from the peak experiences and the experiences of B-cognition Maslow calls the "Being-values" or B-values. The list of B-values is particularly interesting for the present study in that the values which Maslow associates with B-cognition are in general the values which have been associated with hesed. Some of the words used by Maslow in describing these values are wholeness, dichotomy-transcendence, perfection, just-rightness, justice, beauty, honesty, goodness, grace, truth, self-sufficiency, and separateness, i.e., living by its own law.<sup>81</sup>

It is obvious that Maslow's values are not derived from any consideration of the Old Testament. He distilled the values from the responses to his questionnaires about the

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 82.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 83.



peak experiences of his subjects. Yet the experience of hesed and the experience of B-cognition have some common existential roots which lead to an awareness of similar values. I argue that Maslow is concerned with a particular dimension of hesed, that of the relationship of man to himself. In previous discussion an attempt has been made to show the essential unity of these three dimensions. It was suggested that these dimensions represent dimensions of the experience of the Transcendent: the transcendent "out there," the transcendent within, and the transcendent expressed in the selfhood of others. While Maslow would not use the word "transcendent" in quite the theological sense, he cannot avoid the use of the idea. In connection with his discussion of peak experiences and Being-cognition, he uses such terms as ego-transcending, dichotomy-transcendence, and environment-transcendence. That which cuts across all such distinctions is the Transcendent.

What is suggested by all of this is that what is embodied in the hesed idea are the values which emerge from man's relationship to the Transcendent. For the Hebrew this was experienced as a relationship to Yahweh. In this relationship the values of truth, justice, beauty, mercy, love, tenderness, faithfulness, etc., emerge. It was also the experience of the Hebrews that these values were the ones that "worked" in personal and social relationships. Or, to put it another way, in relationships that worked, these values were actualized.

Whether man's experience of the Transcendent grows out of his religious experience, his social experience, or his probing of the depths of his own inner nature, the result tends to be the same: the Transcendent affirms man in his true Being in a way that consistently underscores certain values and points to their ultimacy.

### CONCLUSION

In the preceding pages the idea of hesed has been traced from its origin in Hebrew culture. It has not been possible to delineate clearly the relationship between the social ideal of hesed and the religious ideal; i.e., to demonstrate that one grew out of the other. Perhaps there was never such a separation in the mind of the Hebrew: hesed was simply an expression of the covenant relationship which made secure society possible in the ancient Near-East. This was expressed simultaneously in personal and social contract and in the tribal relationship to Yahweh.

In the development and exposition of the hesed-idea, many values came to be associated with the word: truth, faithfulness, mercy, justice, righteousness, etc. Hesed was commitment to a relationship that worked. In the doing of hesed these values became apparent; hence, in a sense, these values were hesed. That is to say that if life is to work, these are the values which will be actualized.

Tillich's analysis of the nature of love provides an insight into the nature of hesed. He has shown that love

is the drive toward the reunion of the estranged. In this discussion the reason for the close association of hesed with various expressions of love is apparent: hesed is ontologically identical with love. As Tillich demonstrates the ontological unity of love and justice, the meaning of the common hesed-zedakah combination is clarified.

The fact that modern writers are more likely to orient their discussion from the point of view of the subjective experience of the person than from the stance of the man-god encounter "out there," makes it possible to understand through the writings of such thinkers as Maslow and Tillich the commonality of the existential questions, whether asked by an ancient Near-Eastern bedouin, a first-century Christian, an existential theologian, or a modern psychologist. The answers to the existential question may be couched in very different terms, but the unity of the various expressions becomes quite clear.

Finally, it was noted that the values which emerged from the hesed experience were the very values which have been noted by serious thinkers from the beginning of speculative thought. Such values as truth, justice, love, and righteousness derive from the structure of Being itself. There may after all be no more adequate way of expressing all of this than in the words of the Psalmist:

O give thanks unto the Lord, for he is good;  
for his hesed endures forever!

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